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JUNE/JULY 2003
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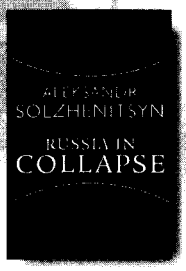

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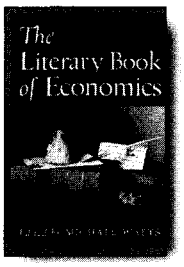

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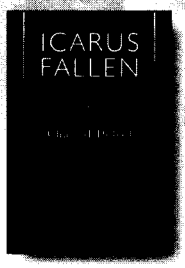

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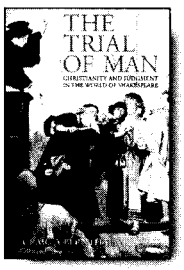

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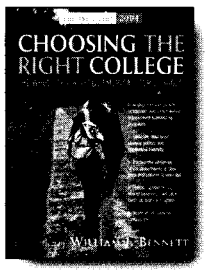

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Getting the Story Right

Stephen M. Barr's "Retelling the Story of Science" (March) provides an excellent framework for understanding the relationship between science and religious faith, and a much-needed retelling of the twentieth-century "story of science."

But while many of the recent scientific discoveries that Professor Barr cites are very important for our understanding of ourselves and our relation to God and the world, I would caution against too much reliance on quantum indeterminacy to provide "scientific" space for human freedom. While it is true that recent discoveries in quantum physics have seriously damaged the deterministic view of the universe by showing that many micro-level physical events seem undetermined by their prior state, I do not believe that this indeterminacy alone can provide sufficient grounding for any meaningful element of freedom. Several reservations could be noted: first, quantum events may occur at too "small" a level to have an impact on macro-level human actions; second, the centrality of free choice in causing an action by determining a certain quantum event would rely on the "cooperation" of other random quantum events as the action is carried out; third, it is unclear if quantum events are really undetermined or if we are simply unable to understand them properly.

It seems to me that rather than look to quantum indeterminacy as a potential savior for free will, we should point to the obvious fact that the very doctrine of determinism is unfounded from the start, especially when applied to human beings. The fact that inanimate objects like planets follow predictable paths does not entail that the same applies to living beings; it need not be the case that, as Newton wrote in his unpublished conclusion to the *Principia Mathematica*, "Whatever reasoning holds for greater motions should hold for lesser ones as well." We constantly experience ourselves as free to choose one course of action over another; this alone should give us solid ground to reject the claim that our actions are determined. It may be unfashionable to believe that there is a real distinction between living and nonliving beings, but honest scientists should be willing to recognize the invalidity of the inference from the apparent determinacy of macro-level causation in inanimate objects to the rather implausible conclusion that human actions are determined. Such a recognition would indeed involve a significant change in the way that modern science is wont to view the world, but it is clearly a necessary shift. There is, however, no pressing need to rely on quantum indeterminacy to do a job for which it seems ill-suited.

John Louis Schwenkler
Washington, D.C.

Stephen M. Barr's informative retelling of the story of science presents valid challenges to scientific materialism at many points. But I am surprised that he would base any part of his apologetic for Christian faith on the irrational quantum mechanics of Bohr and Heisenberg. Make no mistake, in *Physics and Philosophy* Heisenberg clearly states that the "Copenhagen" interpretation of quantum mechanics requires suspension of the law of noncontradiction. In the face of the postmodernist challenge to the rationality of science on the basis of Copenhagen's patent irrationalism, many scientists are bailing out on this interpretation of quantum reality, and in particular on the idea that the consciousness of the observer—rather than the experimental set-up—affects physical results.

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Professor Barr notes that "the scientist has confidence in the intelligibility of the world," but, in effect, he sides with Bohr against Einstein and Schrödinger in their disagreement with Bohr's insistence on the unintelligibility of the quantum world. But now the publication of eminent California Institute of Technology Professor Carver Mead's monograph *Collective Electrodynamics* may be the coup de grâce for the Copenhagen interpretation. In his epilogue, Mead says: "Following the tradition of Einstein and Schrödinger, the pioneers in this new endeavor, Jaynes, Cramer, Zeh, and others . . . have put us in a position to finally settle the Einstein-Bohr debate—with a resounding victory for Einstein."

Since Christian faith affirms the rationality of the Creator, I think that Aquinas would have rejected the unintelligibility of Copenhagen's interpretation of the electron's quantum jump.

David Haddon
Redding, California

Thank you for publishing "Retelling the Story of Science"; it was long overdue. I note, however, that it repeats the standard evolutionary formulation concerning "random mutations" in the second theme of the materialist's story of science. If a serious assault is to be launched against the myth of science as a universal worldview, I would like to suggest that it would be worth explicitly pointing out that it has never been shown that mutations are random. If they were, that could be taken as support for the "Blind Watchmaker" view of the universe, but I believe the use of the word "random" at that point is simply an assumption or, alternatively, a sloppy way of saying that nobody (currently) knows how mutations arise.

As far as I know, there is no evidence to support the idea that genetic mutations are random. It is actually quite difficult to prove randomness, and such a claim is also fundamentally unscientific because, if mutations are truly random, then there is nothing that can ever be investigated with regard to them; there is no underlying structure that could be discovered. This would be unique in the history of science and, unless it has actually been demonstrated, I suggest that care should be taken to avoid implicitly accepting this idea in presentations of evolutionary theory, particularly in presentations from a religious perspective.

In fact, there is evidence that genetic mutations are far from random; it comes from experiments on E. Coli bacteria lacking an enzyme needed for eating lactose. When the bacteria were placed in an environment in which lactose was the only potential food source they rapidly mutated to be able to use it, and their mutation was rapid only in the region of the genome relevant to lactose consumption.

As an aside, I cannot believe that G. K. Chesterton really thought that Brighton is in South Wales; he must have known that it is in Sussex, 150 or 200 miles east of there.

Nigel Dolby
Ham Lake, Minnesota

Stephen M. Barr replies:
I thank John Louis Schwenkler, David Haddon, and Nigel Dolby for their letters.

I agree with much of what Mr. Schwenkler says. Indeed, I made a number of the same points myself. Mr. Schwenkler says that "quantum events," when better understood, may prove to be determined. In my article I noted that there have been many attempts "to restore determinism to physics." I did not rule out the possibility that one of these attempts may someday succeed, but only said that "so far" it "seems unlikely."

Mr. Schwenkler says that "quantum events may occur at too 'small' a level to have an impact on macro-level human actions." In my essay I called attention to this very issue. "[M]any argue," I said, "that the basic building blocks of the brain, such as neurons, are too large for quantum indeterminacy to play a significant role." I did not dismiss that argument, but merely observed that we know too little about the brain "at present" to accept or reject it.

Mr. Schwenkler cautions against "too much reliance on quantum indeterminacy" to provide scientific space for free will. I do not rely on it. What I concluded in my article was only that because of quantum theory the old argument *against* free will on the grounds of physical determinism "can no longer be so simply made." It is an interesting question how one would reconcile human freedom with the laws of physics were they to prove in the end to be deterministic. One way would be to say the laws of physics are violated when humans make free choices. Another would be to say that God so disposed the initial conditions of the universe that whatever humans

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freely will actually comes to pass—a form of "occasionalism." It is because I would not want to rely solely on those possibilities that I think it good news that determinism no longer holds sway in physics as it once did.

Like Mr. Schwenkler, I take free will to be a fact of experience that no theoretical argument could ever make one reasonably doubt.

Mr. Haddon is unhappy with my discussion of quantum theory for other reasons. To him the "irrationalism" of the traditional (or "Copenhagen") interpretation is "patent." It is not so to me. It is true, as he says, that some scientists are "bailing out" of it, but most of them are doing so in favor of the "many worlds interpretation," a view of the universe that I hardly think would have found favor with Aquinas. Others are bailing out in favor of modifications of quantum theory that are deterministic in character.

I want to make clear that I do not insist that the traditional interpretation of quantum theory must be correct; it simply seems to me at present less objectionable and more plausible than the alternatives.

The traditional interpretation of quantum theory does not require one to abandon the laws of logic, only to modify one's concepts. For example, to say "an electron is both a wave and a particle" would violate the law of noncontradiction only if the statement "a particle is not a wave" were an analytic proposition, which is not the case, as far as I can see. It is not that the law of noncontradiction fails, but that certain pre-quantum concepts used to describe the physical world are inadequate. At a more sublime level, the same thing happens in theology. For example, the Bible says that God is living and yet that He is unchanging. Christians say that God is a trinity, and yet that He is absolutely simple. Here, too, there is nothing illogical, just an inadequacy of ordinary terms.

I am not at all sure that the traditional interpretation of quantum theory implies that our consciousness "affects physical results." (Much depends on what one understands the "wavefunction" to be.) However, I do think that common sense tells us that our minds affect physical results. If they didn't they wouldn't be of much use, practically speaking.

Mr. Haddon refers to my article as an "apologetic for Christian faith." I meant it to be a defense of fundamental biblical beliefs, both Jewish and Christian, against materialism.

Mr. Dolby makes some valid observations about the notion of randomness. However, I do not regard that notion as theologically dangerous. To say that mutations are "random" no more conflicts with divine providence than to say that poker is a game of chance or that John was in an accident. As to whether genetic mutations actually are random or follow some systematic and predictable pattern, I do not know.

Finally, I am sure Chesterton knew his own island. Perhaps he imagined his explorer landing first at Brighton, and then pressing on to discover South Wales.

Conflation or Distinction?

In "The Tribunal of Mercy" (March), Daniel P. Moloney tries to conflate justice and mercy. Then, after further trying to conflate retributive justice and vengeance, he discards retributive justice, which is the primary traditional justification for just war and capital punishment. Following the Pope, he presents the advent of modern technology as a kind of "excusa ex machina" that is said to militate against the morality of just war and capital punishment, and he overemphasizes the "defense of the innocent" at the expense of the "punishment of evildoers" as the moral justification for just war and capital punishment. In sum, Mr. Moloney continues the process, begun in the last century, of narrowing and undermining this vital part of once-settled Catholic tradition.

While Mr. Moloney's arguments do make the Catholic tradition more palatable to the lukewarm, what kind of damage will these distortions of the Catholic tradition do to the Church?

Dan Tolleson
Houston, Texas

Daniel P. Moloney replies:

I thank Mr. Tolleson for giving me an opportunity to correct some interpretations of my article that, however understandable, are in fact misinterpretations.

Let me be clear: I don't intend to replace justice with mercy, but to point out that mercy and justice cannot be opposed to each other without justice being merciless and mercy being unjust. This is a point that is central to the traditional Christian understanding of the justice and mercy of God, in whom perfect justice and mercy coexist without contradiction. I was inspired to look at political questions this way by reflecting on *Pastoral Rule* by Pope Gregory the Great and on *Cur Deus Homo* by St. Anselm of Canterbury, as well as on the encyclical *Dives in Misericordia* by John Paul II. I think that these are impeccable sources, so a vision of justice that depends on them is hardly at risk of abandoning the faith given to us by the apostles.

I don't think Catholic doctrine was ever as "settled" on questions of just war and capital punishment as Mr. Tolleson alleges. I do think that it is a settled doctrine that it is possible for a war to be just and for executions to be moral. But there are many "new things," in the sense of Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum*, that make the application of the medieval just war tradition to today's wars something other than straightforward. The modern bureaucratic nation-state is not the same as the medieval Christian king anointed by God to wield the secular sword. New forms of warfare and new weapons (of mass destruction and otherwise) require fresh thinking about whether and how their use can

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be just. On this I think I am with the thought of the Church since the Second Vatican Council.

I do reject the idea of retribution, not because I assimilate it to vengeance, but because I cannot think of a philosophically coherent account of it that is an improvement upon "bringing about the best outcome in the future." Where there is such a difference, that is, where in the name of retribution an action leaves the world worse off than it could otherwise be, then retribution would seem to be unjust. I think the 1998 execution of the miraculously converted Karla Faye Tucker is an example of an injustice done in the name of retribution, and it sickened me. I'm glad that God the Father does not seek retribution from me for my sins but instead acts to bring about the salvation of as many souls as He can. I think that in turn we should be merciful to those who sin against us, without our mercy leading us to neglect our responsibilities to others.

Critics of traditional Catholic teaching on war and capital punishment frequently claim that it doesn't take seriously enough the radical demands of the Sermon on the Mount. It was my hope in the article to respond to these critics without endorsing the pacifistic positions they propose instead. Thomas Aquinas embeds his treatment of just war in a discussion of peace and order; I think it is better to see it as issuing from a particular understanding of mercy. Both are aspects of charity (indeed, the account of "responsibility" I endorse owes much to Aquinas' notion of ordered charity). There is a difference between these approaches, but it is hardly an overturning of the tradition.

The German Church

Wolfhart Pannenberg's article on the current situation in Germany is quite incisive ("Letter from Germany," March). However, there is one thing with which—based on my experience of living there many years—I would disagree.

I don't believe one can attribute the rebellions in Germany in the late 1960s and early 1970s to the Vietnam War protests in the United States. It was more a rebellion of the university students over the postwar climate in Germany, a climate that had lasted much too long. Certainly, the activities of the murderous Baader-Meinhof gang could not be attributed to any sort of American influence.

When we began to participate in the religious life of Germany in 1971, my wife and I were startled at the poor Mass attendance in our parish in Hamburg, and the almost total decimation of the Evangelical Church. The Catholic Church had become an organ for social betterment of the people; the Evangelical Church was no better, perhaps even worse.

The preaching of the Christian Gospel was heard only rarely. In some dioceses, less than that. More recently, the German hierarchy led by Karl Cardinal Lehmann was almost in a state of rebellion with Rome over the hierarchy's financial and moral support for organizations that participated in the decision to perform abortions.

The reason that church attendance, Catholic and Protestant, is so abysmal in Germany is that Christ is not preached. A re-Christianization of Germany, and for that matter all of Western Europe, is an absolute must if Europe is ever to regain faith in itself as a determining, confident voice in the history of humankind.

Edward Lewis
Richardson, Texas

Above Politics

Richard John Neuhaus has provided a succinct assessment of the failings of Joseph Frank's biography of Dostoevsky ("Dostoevsky and the Fiery Word," Public Square, March). One small quibble: I cannot help thinking that it is best to let the great novels speak for themselves, and few are greater, or more capable of giving us eloquent lessons about the nature of their genesis, than *The Brothers Karamazov*. Dostoevsky's attachment to the young generation and his love for European liberals (as opposed to the "disdain" that Father Neuhaus imagines) are beautifully illustrated in the character of Kolya, that charming, insecure, impulsive boy. The author's fulminations against European liberalism, his fervent Slavophilism, should not be dissociated from the dialectic of his spiritual evolution. The great Dostoevsky who enthralls us in one of the masterpieces of the world seems to have risen above political oppositions. The sneering, grimacing irony of his earlier works had gradually gone away.

Trevor Merrill
Somerville, Massachusetts

A Misreading Misread

In my *National Post* (Toronto) column of November 26, 2002, titled "What Next? Militant Christianity?" I summarized an argument made by Philip Jenkins. To ensure accuracy, I showed a prepublication draft of the article to Professor Jenkins, who gave me his *nihil obstat*.

It therefore came as a bit of a surprise to read Richard John Neuhaus stating that I "misread" Jenkins (While We're At It, February).

Father Neuhaus then goes on to disagree with some of the ideas I forwarded, but he really disagrees with Philip Jenkins, their author, not with me, who is merely their transmitter.

Daniel Pipes
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

RJN replies:
Since I usually agree with Mr. Pipes and Mr. Jenkins, I am sorry to learn that, on the item in question, I apparently disagree with both.

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One Darkest Night

One darkest night I went,
aflame with love's devouring eager burning—
O fortunate event!—
no witnesses discerning,
the house now still from which my steps were turning.

Hidden by darkness, bent
on flight, disguised, down secret steps sojourning—
O fortunate event!—
Hidden by dark, and yearning,
the house now still from which my steps were turning;

In that most blissful night,
in secrecy, since none had seen my going,
nor did I pause for sight,
nor had I light, for showing
the route, but that which in my heart was glowing.

This only did the guiding,
surer than the blaze when noonday shone,
to where he was abiding—
who was to me well known—
where we would be together and alone.

O night that led me true,
O night more fair than morning's earliest shining,
O night that wrought from two—
lover, beloved entwining—
beloved and lover one in their combining!

On my new-flowered breast,
to him alone and wholly sanctified,
he leaned and lay at rest;
his pleasure was my guide,
and cedars to the wind their scent supplied.

Down from the tower, breezes
came, while soft fingers winnowed through his hair;
a touch that wounds and pleases
caressed my throat with air,
leaving every sense suspended there.

I stayed, all else forgetting,
inclined toward the beloved, face to face;
all motion halted, letting
care vanish with no trace,
forgotten in the lilies of that place.

St. John of the Cross (1542-1591)
Translated from the Spanish by Rhina P. Espaillat

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Opinion

What God Knows

Timothy George

There is a medium-sized theological brouhaha stirring within the evangelical academy these days, and, unlike some of the other intra-evangelical debates of recent years, this one is about something really important: God. In 1994 five evangelical scholars, led by Canadian Baptist theologian Clark Pinnock, published *The Openness of God: A Biblical Challenge to the Traditional Understanding of God.* Since then, a plethora of essays and books have been published in support of "the open view of God," and an equally impressive number in opposition. The debate has gone public at annual meetings of the Evangelical Theological Society, a learned guild of several thousand theologians, and this fall that body will consider the possible expulsion of two of the original openness thinkers.

I recently overheard the following conversation between two mainline Protestants: "What's this open view of God all about?" asked one. "Oh," replied the other, "that's just the evangelicals playing at process theology." Well, sort of. It is true that openness thinkers accept, with few qualifications, the process critique of the God of the Great Tradition. That God, they say, is too static, too controlling, too corrupted by the Greek metaphysical preoccupations of the early Church Fathers. They propose a God who is more dynamic, more responsive to His creatures, more open to give-and-take relationships with human beings who "participate with Him to bring the future into being." Like A. N. Whitehead, Charles Hartshorne, Schubert Ogden, and John Cobb, openness evangelicals also believe that they can better account for the reality of suffering and evil in the world. Indeed, theodicy is the driving engine of the movement.

Still, openness thinkers are not pure process theologians. They agree with the classical tradition that God created the world ex nihilo. They also say that God is omni-resourceful and has exhaustive knowledge of all that has happened in the past and of everything that is going on now, including the motives and intentions of every human being. What God cannot know completely is the future, and this for two reasons. First, the future is not "there" to be known until it happens, not even for God; and second, if God could know the future acts of His creatures, that would destroy the libertarian free will with which He has endowed them and thus absolve them of all moral responsibility for their acts.

On their own grounds, though, it is hard to see how the seminiscient deity of open theism helps much with the problem of evil. If God has comprehensive knowledge of everything past and present, and if He has the capacity to intervene in the course of human affairs, then why doesn't He come to the rescue as soon as He sees that things have gotten out of hand? Maybe He couldn't know for sure back in 1933 that Hitler would freely decide to carry out the Holocaust, but when it was well underway a decade later, why didn't He use His omnipotent resources to bring it to a halt? Did He "allow" it to go on just to preserve Hitler's libertarian free will? Such a God has just as much to account for as the old-fashioned deity dismissed by the process model. Open theism grants God too much power to get Him off the theodicy hook, but not enough power to support a plausible doctrine of providence.

The openness debate has done one good thing for evangelicals: it has refocused our attention on the character and nature of God, a topic surely more substantive than the relative merit of praise choruses or church growth statistics. Moreover, openness thinkers are right to question certain forms of classical theism that have indeed played down the personal character of God and His interactivity with the world and history. The Nicene doctrine of the Holy Trinity was developed in part to counter the pagan notion of God as a transcendent monad devoid of communicability and love. No one can read Athanasius, Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, or Wesley with any care without realizing how committed they were to the compassionate, covenantal, dynamic God of the Bible, the God who "spared not His own Son but delivered him up for us all," as St. Paul put it (Romans 8:32). But none of these great teachers of the Church deemed it necessary to deny divine foreknowledge of future contingents (as openness theologians do) in order to affirm the relationality and responsiveness of the one true God.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* has well summarized the "traditional" view of God's omniscience, a view held by Calvinists and Arminians, Dominicans and Jesuits, Molinists and Jansenists alike, despite their differences on other matters:

> By His providence God protects and governs all things which He has made, "reaching mightily

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> from one end of the earth to the other, and ordering all things well." "For all are open and laid bare to his eyes," even those things which are yet to come into existence through the free action of His creatures.

C. S. Lewis put it more succinctly in *Mere Christianity*: "Everyone who believes in God at all believes that He knows what you and I are going to do tomorrow." Openness theologians are not impressed by such pronouncements, for they believe sincerely that what they are proposing has biblical warrant. What about the passages that say God "repents" of decisions He has made, or changes His plans in response to human choices? The openness discussion has created a hermeneutical crisis for evangelicals. For so long we have read the Bible in exegetical isolation from the gathered wisdom of the fathers, the schoolmen, and the reformers that we have become vulnerable to all kinds of aberrant ideas with alleged biblical support. Shakespeare did not have evangelical wrangles in mind when he wrote, "In religion, what damnéd error but some sober brow will bless it and approve it with a text, hiding the grossness with fair ornament?" but his words are relevant to this discussion. The Arians, Pelagians, and Socinians were all sincere believers in (and heavy quoters of) the Bible, and they were all sincerely wrong about the most important matters of the faith.

This does not mean that traditional theological construals are always right. They are not. But it does mean that we should learn to read the Scriptures in company with the whole Church, knowing all the while that, as John Robinson said to the Pilgrims, "The Lord hath yet more truth and light to break forth out of His Holy Word." In the sixteenth century, Luther and Calvin did not set forth the principles of the Reformation as findings they had discovered de novo. Instead, they argued *against* tradition *from* tradition, or better put, they argued from a shallower tradition to a profounder one. Thus, the recent ECT statement "Your Word is Truth" (FT, August/September 2002) makes a profoundly Protestant point, even if it is also a profoundly Catholic one: "The isolation of Scripture study from the believing community of faith disregards the Holy Spirit's work in guiding the witness of the people of God to scriptural truths, and leaves the interpretation of that truth vulnerable to unfettered subjectivism. . . . Scripture itself is not understood in a vacuum apart from the historical existence and life of the community of faith."

Openness theologians can claim biblical support for their dogma of a seminiscient deity only by a hermeneutic of selective literalism. For example, they interpret quite literally biblical statements about God's repentance, citing this as evidence that God really does not know the future with precision. But they gloss over other biblical texts which say that God also "forgets" aspects of the past, that He does not remember the sins of His people (cf. Isaiah 43:25). Are we to suppose then that God suffers from amnesia as well as ignorance of the future? Openness theism teaches that God cannot know the future (although He can know what He intends to do in the future), for the future has not yet happened. However, Jesus predicted not only the death of Peter, but also the precise mode of his martyrdom (John 21:18-19). Was this just an educated guess, a holy hunch? The consensual wisdom of the Church's exegetical tradition has been able to account for difficult biblical texts—and let us admit there are some—without breaching the sovereignty of the God who is the Creator of time as well as space, and Lord of the future no less than the past.

As Christians committed to the God who became incarnate in Jesus Christ, we can applaud the open theist rejection of the static, loveless, uninvolved God of Aristotelian philosophy, the God Thomas Hardy once referred to as "the dreaming, dark, dumb Thing that turns the handle of this idle Show." The open theists are right to protest against such a God. The biblical God is indeed a God of relationships. He is compared to a loving father, a caring mother, a tender shepherd, a faithful husband, a generous friend. But the God of grace is also the God of glory, as that maverick preacher, Harry Emerson Fosdick, put it so well in his great hymn. *Divine sovereignty and significant human freedom are not competitive exclusives.* It is not as though God and human beings were locked together in a finite room with a limited supply of oxygen—the more God breathes with His big lungs the less air there is for His human creatures. God is not in the suffocating business. We need not bring Him down to size in order to lift up the true humanity of men and women made in His image. God's goodness is not threatened by His greatness. God's grace and glory coalesce.

In the course of his long and sometimes bitter dispute with his former fellow-traveler Rudolf Bultmann, Karl Barth once said that the best answer to a bad theology is a better one. Perhaps a better theology of God will emerge from this present debate. In the meantime, Thomas Oden, an Arminian theologian who has encouraged free discussion of openness ideas while showing no sympathy for them, has said that those given to the fantasy of divine ignorance of the future should be resisted with charity. Charitable resistance is a hard thing to come by among evangelicals for whom the more usual expedients in theological controversy are either uncritical toleration or raucous denuncia-

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tion. But charitable resistance is just what we need right now.

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Justice Stevens' Religion Problem

Robert F. Nagel

On many occasions the Supreme Court has declared that the religion clause of the First Amendment prohibits government from acting with the purpose of disapproving a particular religion or religion in general. For instance, in a colorful case involving a city ordinance restricting the practice of animal sacrifice, the Court severely criticized officials for acting out of animosity towards the Santeria religion, which engages in the ritualistic slaughter of pigeons, goats, and turtles (among other animals) and at least sometimes leaves the carcasses along roadsides and in other public places. A majority of the Justices went so far as to proclaim, "The Free Exercise Clause commits government itself to religious tolerance, and upon even slight suspicion that proposals for state intervention stem from animosity to religion . . . all officials must remember their own high duty to the Constitution." This duty demands that officials be "resolute . . . [to] ensure" that disapproval of religion is never among the reasons for governmental action.

Good words indeed. But one wonders what they might require of the Justices themselves. After all, as the rather grisly specifics of the practice of animal sacrifice suggest, it would require a rather unnatural detachment for the members of the Court not to disapprove of any of the variety of religious beliefs or practices that they encounter in the cases they must decide. Indeed, looking back at the history of the Court, there are indications—both in opinions and from biographical information—that even famous civil libertarians, including Justices William O. Douglas and Hugo Black, strongly disapproved of aspects of certain religions. Writing in 1983, Michael E. Smith noted that Douglas' autobiography expressed contempt for conventional religion and that Black's son acknowledged his father's dark suspicions about the Catholic Church. Smith carefully analyzed major cases of the day to show that these biases affected the way the two Justices decided cases. We can assume that all the Justices sitting on the Court today, like other humans, have their own preferences and biases about religion, but the judicial opinions of one of them, Justice John Paul Stevens, raise more than a slight suspicion that some of his actions on the bench stem from animosity, if not to animal sacrifice, at least to certain less exotic religious beliefs and practices.

Consider Stevens' brief dissenting opinion in the recent landmark case approving Ohio's school voucher program. The problem is not that Justice Stevens took the position that educational vouchers paid to parents and available for use in either secular or religious schools amounted to an establishment of religion. Nor is the problem that he went so far as to argue that the Court should "ignore" both the fact that the voucher program was initiated in response to a severe educational crisis in the Cleveland public schools and the fact that parental decisions about how to spend their vouchers were voluntary. These positions are intellectually stark, but they need not indicate hostility to religious education.

The problem is that in four different places in an opinion barely five paragraphs long, Justice Stevens used the word "indoctrination" as a synonym for religious education. Stevens asserted that the voucher program was being used to pay for "the indoctrination of thousands of grammar school children." He surmised that an educational emergency might provide a motivation for parents to "accept religious indoctrination [of their children] that they otherwise would have avoided." He decried the fact that "the vast majority" of voucher recipients chose to receive "religious indoctrination at state expense." And he depicted the voucher program as a governmental choice "to pay for religious indoctrination."

As striking as it is, this use of the word "indoctrination" does not necessarily indicate hostility to religion. Like the words "sectarian" and "fundamentalist," which have appeared with disturbing regularity in Supreme Court opinions, "indoctrinate" has a literal meaning that is not pejorative. It can, of course, mean simply to instruct or to teach. But, needless to say, like those other words, it has more sinister connotations. Given the common association of the word "indoctrinate" with totalitarian methods, there might be at least a "slight suspicion" that Justice Stevens did not use the term in its neutral sense, especially since he nowhere refers to public school indoctrination. In any event, the duty to determine whether Justice Stevens' official positions reflect animosity to religion arose well before the voucher case.

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It can be traced back as early as 1990, when the religion clause expert Douglas Laycock noted that under Stevens' constitutional decisions religion is "subject to all the burdens of government, but entitled to few of the benefits." Laycock charged that the apparent explanation for this combination of legal positions was hostility to religion. Laycock's hypothesis ripened into full-blown suspicion by June 2000 when Justice Stevens took the position that the free speech rights of the Boy Scouts were not violated by a state law requiring them to employ an avowed homosexual as an assistant scoutmaster. In the course of his dissent, Stevens offered his opinion about the source of what he termed "prejudices" against homosexuality. He wrote, "Like equally atavistic opinions about certain racial groups, these roots have been nourished by sectarian doctrine." Whatever he might have meant later by using the word "indoctrination," there is no question what "prejudices" and "atavistic" mean. The passage is, as Michael Stokes Paulsen of the Minnesota Law School put it, a "slander, disparaging the good faith . . . of any religious worldview—such as those of [some] Christians, Jews, and Muslims—that adheres to traditional views of sexual morality."

Perhaps the repeated use of a particularly offensive word in one judicial opinion and the appearance of shockingly hostile sentences in another only raise a suspicion of antireligious bigotry. However, the animus that is suggested, if confirmed, would certainly be important in assessing a whole range of positions taken by Justice Stevens. For example, a couple of years ago he wrote an opinion for the Court validating Colorado's so-called "bubble law," which requires protestors to stay eight feet from any person approaching a health care facility. Among the many remarkable aspects of this opinion was Stevens' strong solicitude for the right of "unwilling listeners" not to be jarred or offended by the protestors' messages. This solicitude is remarkable because normal free speech principles emphatically (and somewhat dogmatically) require citizens on public streets to put up with the hurly-burly of untrammeled debate. In his biting dissent Justice Antonin Scalia charged that Justice Stevens' unusual approach was a result of judicial bias in favor of abortion. But what is the source of this bias? Might it be that Justice Stevens sees the antiabortion position as rooted in religion—and thus antiabortion teachings as irrational indoctrination and antiabortion convictions as atavistic prejudices?

At almost the same time that he wrote the opinion sustaining the "bubble law," Justice Stevens issued another opinion for the Court, this one invalidating a high school policy that permitted student-led prayer before football games. Again Stevens expressed concern about unwilling listeners, at least those who didn't want to hear any religious message. Stevens went so far as to worry that these students would be forced into religious conformity and, indeed, to be "outsiders, not full members of the political community." But since a school district is entirely free to authorize students to make secular statements over the public address system, the potential effect of the Court's decision is to turn religious students into unwilling listeners, too. Stevens offered not a word of concern about whether religious students might feel themselves to be less than full members of the political community if, by order of the nation's highest court, their messages and only their messages are categorically excluded from the school's public arena.

Even decisions that as a formal matter have little to do with religion take on a different coloration when Stevens' apparent scorn for some religions is factored in. On February 26 of this year, for instance, eight members of the Court ruled that the federal racketeering statute (popularly known as RICO) did not apply to the efforts of the Pro-Life Action Network to shut down various abortion clinics. The rather straightforward reasoning was that, unlike the members of organized crime who are typical objects of RICO prosecutions, the antiabortion protestors did not obtain anyone else's property for their own use. Since the crime of extortion requires that the offender obtain someone else's property, the pro-life protests could not be prosecuted under RICO. Even pro-abortion rights advocates like Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg agreed. Only Justice Stevens dissented. He claimed that "even when an extortionist has not taken possession of the property that the victim has relinquished, she has nonetheless 'obtained' that property if she has used violence to force her victim to abandon it." On the basis of this thin reed Stevens was willing to impose on protestors acting out of profound religious convictions the same draconian punishments that are ordinarily imposed on gangsters.

What, then, should Supreme Court Justices do if they are convinced that the decisions of one or more of their colleagues are being influenced by disapproval of religion? The Court was less than clear about the precise contours of the "high duty" it imposed on other government officials. The duty surely includes an obligation to investigate suspicious proposals and to reject those animated by hostility to religion. Accordingly, at a minimum, all of the Justices should remain vigilant for signs of animosity towards religion in the work of their colleagues and should decline to join any opinions that may be improperly motivated. As for Justice Stevens himself, it is an arresting fact that in the animal sacrifice case he joined the opinion announcing the constitutional requirement that public officials dis-

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associate themselves from antireligious measures. Perhaps he should give some thought to what this duty requires of himself.

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Secularism at Bay

C. John Sommerville

Among the many notable decisions of the U.S. Supreme Court in the area of religion was the 1963 case *Abington Township School District v. Schempp,* which held that tax-supported schools were only allowed to teach *about* religion. Meaning, of course, that government schools could not directly *teach religion* in the sense of encouraging belief. But teaching about religion "relativizes" or marginalizes it. It teaches children to see religion from the outside, from some perspective that is thought to transcend it. The Supreme Court recognized this in stipulating that the teaching of religion should be "part of a secular program of education." Thus it would tend to undermine the claims of any particular religion, although perhaps it was meant to give children an appreciation of "religion in general."

At the time, it was usual for intellectuals to think of the secular as the natural, and even as humanity's destiny. By contrast, religion seemed doubtful and divisive; it was expected to fade. But things haven't turned out that way. Philosophers, for example, have succeeded in showing that secularism itself is not a neutral, absolute position, rising above all faith commitments. Secularism may actually turn out to be a stage within history, rather than its final goal. For it is now commonly recognized that rationalism and science themselves are based on shifting intellectual commitments, commitments that are accepted before their principles can be formulated. There seem not to be self-validating principles at the basis of all thought. Logic does not take us down to bedrock, but merely to certain useful assumptions. It does not tell us how much truth there is in our thinking, but only how much consistency.

The result of these new realizations is that we can now problematize or relativize secular rationalism. We can see it as one way of thinking, among others. We can describe its history, assumptions, methods, and the institutions that support it. It is thus possible to teach "about" secularism rather than simply *teaching* secularism, as our universities, public schools, periodical media, and courts have been doing for so long.

Such a course of instruction would begin by noting that "secularization" means, in the first place, the separation of religion from other aspects of life and thought. Likewise, "the secular" or "secularity" refers to a highly developed state of this separation, when institutions and thinking itself become indifferent to religion. "Secularism," by contrast, is something else entirely. It is the conscious or unconscious effort to keep religion marginalized. Above all, our lesson plan would indicate that there has been a substantial effort in this direction during the past century, but also that it is now showing signs of failure in all of the institutions noted above.

The first thing to note about our universities is that they have failed to fulfill their original hopes and are fast becoming marginal to American society. The idea that universities could be described as marginal may strike some as ludicrous. They are bigger and better funded than ever. And yet, they do not give the country intellectual, cultural, or political leadership. They do not seem to be swaying elections these days, or setting the tone for the arts, or raising the questions that occupy us. Size and specialization have made them increasingly ingrown, so that they are answering questions that no one asks and giving answers that no one can understand. Our media seldom look to them for enlightenment if they can think of an entertainer, politician, or journalist instead.

Not even scientists offer leadership any longer. They used to decide the next questions and then call for government or business support. Nowadays, it is government and business that set the agenda and then hire university scientists to do the work. The goal is patents. Like the liberal arts, the sciences are increasingly engaged with a technical rather than a philosophical approach to their subjects. They no longer capture the imagination of the young, and it is increasingly international students who keep the graduate programs going. Apologists for science have become alarmed at the fact that science is questioned within the academy itself, by historians of science and feminists. Edward O. Wilson, the late Stephen Jay Gould, and others have shown increasing resentment when science is treated merely as a servant, rather than as a metaphysic and an ideology, and accorded society's highest respect. It would bother them to think that our high-tech hospitals are our major prayer centers. Americans think highly of science, of course, but don't see that this requires them to ignore religion.

Postmodernism may not be as formidable in our universities as alarmists would make it seem. But it has fos-

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tered a recognition of the artificial character of rationalism. As a result, religious voices like those of philosophers Alastair MacIntyre, Charles Taylor, Paul Ricoeur, and John Milbank are closer to the heart of academic debate than they have been for several generations. The problem, however, is that the university is no longer characterized by debate. The metaphor of a "marketplace of ideas" seems more appropriate. Insofar as this is an apt description, it spells trouble for secularism. It was expected to argue religion down and to establish naturalistic or materialistic worldviews. But arguments depend on intellectual constraints, which now seem lacking. Our post-secular situation is governed by fashion rather than argument, responding to boredom and restlessness. So our narrative leads to a student generation that thinks that its views should get as much respect as anybody's—at least after graduation.

Tracing the fate of secularism within the public schools means following their emphasis on tolerance. Tolerance is crucial to incorporating diversity or multiculturalism in the curriculum. It grew out of the relativism that was originally promoted as a means in the search for a many-sided truth. But as truth recedes ever further into the distance, tolerance has become an end in itself. This makes it hard for teachers to squelch the ideas that students may bring to school with them. To constrain debate, there needed to be something like rationalism to impose settled reference points. Now teachers can only silence religions by referring to the respect that is due to other religions.

Our courts have been mindful of public education, as they must be. But these same courts are beginning to realize that they have been promoting only the freedoms of secular students and parents. There are stirrings of something new when they rule in favor of those students who exercise freedoms of expression and assembly for religious purposes.

Student religious clubs may be resurrecting what school chapel attendance once accomplished. We find it quaint that colleges and even some state universities required chapel attendance, until secularism ended that in the early twentieth century. But at the very least, chapel attendance could remind students of the limits of their knowledge, and that choices should be made in the light of wisdom. There is nothing that does that in universities these days, least of all the timid ethics-in-the-professions electives.

Then there's the story of the media. In a secularist society the communications media take the place of tradition. The press, and even the periodical press, were expected to break the power of entrenched error. They would keep ideas in play so that reason would be unconstrained. Religion would lose out because it lacked the means of development that modernity depends on.

What has happened, we now realize, is that daily media have driven the more substantial media out of circulation. Books cannot compete with news. The print revolution that Marshall McLuhan made famous has been overtaken by a news revolution which makes its profits out of deconstructing culture and de-contextualizing "events." This is required by the economics of the business, which needs to make each day's edition seem vital. Though journalists may revisit the same story, it must be from a different angle, lest we lose interest. All the tricks of doing so have become more apparent in the last two decades, as the news industry has demanded greater profit levels. Capitalism requires that money find its most fruitful use, which means that news product has become entertainment rather than enlightenment. This is not good for secularism.

Of course the number of books published is greater than ever. There are seventy thousand new trade book titles each year in the U.S. alone. The upshot is that there is hardly any hope of debating things rationally. Indeed, we hardly try, being satisfied by the one big story of the day. People seem to imagine they are "informed" for having heard it. But the hope of a progressively more enlightened populace seems increasingly unrealistic.

When it comes to the courts, our narrative would begin in the mid-twentieth century when the American judiciary was guided by an interpretation of the First Amendment that posited a "wall of separation" between "church and state." The difficulties in sorting this out led to noticeable inconsistencies and the expectation of a reaction. Judges have sheltered plaintiffs who objected to the use of religious terms even outside of instruction, while refusing to shelter those who object to the imposition of secularist curricula or New Age assignments. Irreligious children have been called impressionable and vulnerable, while religious children are told to get used to it. Courts have argued that exposing children to religious texts will have an impermissible effect, but that "mere exposure" to antireligious texts will have no effect.

Yet the view that government schools should be neutral rather than secular is now out in the open. Warren Nord's *Religion and American Education* has shown that the Supreme Court has sometimes held that the First Amendment requires not just neutrality between religions but neutrality between religion and nonreligion. Nord's own conclusion is that "neutrality *requires* the integration of religion into the [public school] curriculum," since it is essential to the study of culture, history, politics, society, economics, and the uses of science.

But to teach about religion, as Nord suggests, would not achieve neutrality without teaching about secular-

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ism too. Neither approach will be easy, given the training our teachers have received and the dominance of the old paradigm. But in time, teachers should find how deeply religion is embedded in our thinking on all subjects. One cannot begin any study without tripping over concepts that carry religious freight, most notably in the idea of the human. Concepts of wealth, disease, sanity, justice, human rights, the humanities, do not make sense in the terms of naturalism. They all imply an optimal state, even a purpose implicit in the human, so that there would be no absurdity in teaching, with Jefferson, that all men are created equal.

Of course, one possible end to the story of secularism has already gone into the history books as the collapse of world communism. The often humane hopes that drew some Americans toward communism would make sobering reading if related to recognizably secular goals today. And the cautions of those like C. S. Lewis, who noted the elitist and manipulative nature of secularism in *The Abolition of Man*, will seem more prophetic even than Orwell.

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Church Clothes

The chameleon charms with wizardry
to escape his humble lizardry,
blending in with vain show blizzardry,
Chameleon is confused.

The peacock moves with pageantry,
unfolding feathered tapestry,
to hide would be disastery,
Peacock is convinced.

And which will dress our history,
bold plumes or image-shiftery?
Word, sacrament, and mystery,
or blending in, confused?

Richard C. Lambert

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God in a Godless Time

Leszek Kolakowski

If someone were to ask: "How do things stand with the 'God Question?'" many of us would be inclined to respond spontaneously: "Is there such a question?"

"Certainly not!" maintain the thoroughgoing rationalists and scientists, who claim that the concept of God cannot be presented in any way as an understandable, noncontradictory intellectual construction. Before we ask the "Question," we are told, we have to know what the question is about. Therefore, we must have at our disposal a clear conception of God before formulations such as "God exists" or "God does not exist" or "Does God exist?" can be taken up as objects of reflection. This, however, is impossible. Every abstract formulation of God is either contradictory or unintelligible as a matter of principle, because it can in no way be brought into contact with empirical reality. Because of this, the "Question" is empty.

But neither does the "God Question" exist for any believer—if there are such people—whose inherited belief remains rock-solid and unshakable. They know without a doubt that they live in a world directed by God. And for those chosen souls who have shared in the blessing of mystical experience, perhaps the word "faith" is inappropriate. For faith is only active when a shadowy distance arouses the potential for uncertainty between the perceiver and the perceived. In mystical experience, all distance is removed. These people, naturally, do not pose themselves any "God Question."

Even for convinced atheists—if there are such people—there cannot be any "God Question." They know, without any doubt, that science has conclusively driven God out of the world, and that the image of God is an expression either of the leftovers of old superstitions and ignorance, or of a psychological defense mechanism, or of social conflicts.

The world in which we live, however, is not a world of people who are fixed in satisfied and contented lives of belief or unbelief. It is much more an era of refugees and exiles, the "eternal Jew" searching for a lost—spiritual or physical—homeland. In this nomadic life nothing is certain, nothing is guaranteed, nothing is finally set in stone, nothing—apart from wandering—is unquestionably given.

A God who once confirmed the well-established order of values, social relations, rules of thought, and the physical cosmos and who was meant to be the dome over this order is no longer there because the order itself is no longer visible. So long as people could trust the durability of this order, the godless also had their place in it (I only have the Christian-European civilization in view). Whether they counted as mistaken, as crazy, or as messengers from hell, their place within the recognized world order was accounted for. Whether they were also persecuted, punished, or sentenced to death, they were in a sense fortunate, because not only was their cause secure, it was also spiritually worry-free.

But along with the self-confidence of belief, the self-confidence of unbelief has also been broken. In contrast to the cozy world of old, protected by the well-intentioned, friendly Nature of the atheistic Enlightenment, the godless world of today is perceived as an afflicted, eternal chaos. It is robbed of all meaning, all direction, all road signs, and all structure. Thus spoke Zarathustra. For over a hundred years, since Nietzsche announced the death of God, one has rarely seen cheerful atheists. A world in which a person is left to his own powers, in which he has declared himself a free lawgiver for any order of good and evil, in which he—freed from the condition of a slave of God—had hoped to recapture his

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lost worth, this world has transformed itself into a place of endless worry. The absence of God became the ever more open wound of the European spirit, even as it slipped off into oblivion, brought on by an artificial anesthetic. Let us simply compare the godless world of Diderot, Helvétius, and Feuerbach with that of Kafka, Camus, and Sartre. The collapse of Christianity that was so joyfully awaited by the Enlightenment took place almost simultaneously with the collapse of the Enlightenment itself. The new, shining order of anthropocentrism that was built up in place of the fallen God never came. What happened? Why was the fate of atheism in such a strange way tied to that of Christianity, so that the two enemies accompanied one another in their misfortune and in their insecurity?

The history of Christianity certainly left us with great testimonials of spiritual restlessness from different periods: in the writings of the young Augustine, Pascal, and Kierkegaard. But restlessness as the quality of the spirit par excellence, its quidditas ("this-ness"), is a sign of our time and our culture, which lives and goes forward in a creative "swing" and that we all experience as a sickening—even if we cannot agree on a diagnosis. Is the place abandoned by God the source of this sickness? Was Kierkegaard right when he said that all despair about earthly things is actually—and without us necessarily being aware of this—despair about the Eternal? We cannot, naturally, prove this; we can only suspect it.

This suspicion not only haunts the world of the intellectual, the philosopher, and the poet, but also that of the European spirit in its customary daily life. Restlessness torments and lays waste to the active poles of religious culture—Christianity and godlessness; it can also be seen in the widespread indifference that appears today as the main form of spiritual life. Even within apparent apathy, the disturbing void cannot be completely disguised. Behind all our successes and experiences lurks the apocalyptic warning: "You maintain: I am rich and well and lack nothing. But you do not know that, all the while, you are wretched and pitiful, poor, blind, and naked" (Revelation 3:17).

It is often said that secularization arises from, on the one hand, the progress of science, whose role has so powerfully grown in every area of our lives and in which God no longer has a place; and on the other hand, from the inability of Christianity, particularly the Catholic Church, to overcome the great social problems that have followed from industrialization. On this view, Christianity has proven itself numb to new social conflicts and needs because its eyes are incessantly directed only toward heaven and toward God. Having been forgotten, earthly things must take care of themselves.

Neither part of this popular opinion appears credible to me. Concerning the first, it is certainly true that God is not an empirical hypothesis that allows itself to be scientifically tested or presented, or ever will be so presented. The insufficiency of our knowledge in this regard is inescapable. There is no logically accessible passage from empirical knowledge, however far it might be extended, to infinity, not to mention to an intentionally active, personally conceived Providence. Ever since the seventeenth century, when scientific research separated itself from theology and religious worship and codified its procedural rules, its support and its foundational methods have been completely indifferent to the "God Question." The point of this codification was to make scientific results into tools of prediction, and through this to place natural phenomena under human control.

That God could be driven from the world through such means is not at all credible, unless one confuses science with scientific rationalism. The latter—that is, the rule according to which the value of knowledge is determined by the unmistaken application of scientific rules—is an arbitrary epistemological doctrine devised by philosophers who intended to undermine religious belief. Scientism is neither a logical consequence of science, nor—one may plausibly maintain—its social consequence. Even if they have developed parallel to one another, this was not because science causally begat scientism. Of course their connection was not accidental. Scientific rationalism is grounded on normative principles and expresses a specific hierarchy of values. God is excluded from the scientific conception of the world because it excludes everything that does not allow itself to be used in the human drive for lordship over nature.

In fact, both Christian theology and its popular construction were not innocent in the confusion between rational knowledge and faith, in that they are the ones who tried to convince people that one could discover God's justice in the world empirically and could magically harness Him in our strivings and passions. This fundamentally anti-Christian point of view is precisely what one must call superstition. The superstition consists in conceiving of God as a machine that—thanks to the application of the correct technique—will produce the desired effects, as if, for example, prayer were a technical operation that, if it were carefully enough carried out, would bring us perfectly predicted results.

To the extent that Christian teaching furthered such superstitious attitudes it contributed fatefully to its own demise. This also applies to theology that claims to practice "scientific theology." When belief vies with science for the use of the same criteria, it is damned to become a pseudo-science whose efforts are always frustrated and whose claims will be disproved at every step. The more that the confusion of belief with profane knowledge spread, the more people—especially cultured people—felt compelled to leave belief to the mercy of superstí-

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tion. The Christian worldview is and remains a clear-sighted vision of human fate. "Scientific theology," by contrast, is a superstition.

In this sense, one may maintain that scientific rationalism had a healing effect on culture, in that it contributed to the cleansing of superstition from Christianity and gave it back a better self-understanding of its calling. Atheism and scientism strengthen one another; that goes without saying. But, once again, neither of the two counts as a true product of science. The origin of both can be much better sought in cultural facts, in our inclination to scorn everything that appears useless to our libidinous quest for lordship and our urge to possess. The present crisis of trust in science and technology in the face of its dangerous results may weaken the ideologies of scientific rationalism. The crisis itself, however, has nothing to do with the validity or lack of validity of the norms of scientific knowledge.

To say, then, that Christianity has suffered such great losses because it is not "scientific" enough appears to me to be astonishingly naive. One must assert the opposite: whenever Christianity wants to shore up its "scientific" value it can only lead to a powerless pseudo-knowledge, and it was precisely such claims that produced the unproductive conflicts with science. It was precisely Christianity's fear of defining itself in clear opposition to rationalism that led not only to the erosion of faith but also to the fruitless attempts to attack science. Because even the idea of a contradiction between science and faith was predicated on a concept of faith as a kind of profane knowledge.

The same is true about the second reproach, in which Christianity, because it is only concerned with spiritual values, has neglected concern for the earthly community and has neither sought nor found answers to the horrible social problems of modernity. With this it has damned itself to ruin. But isn't it more accurate to affirm the opposite view? The error of the Church exists much more in the fact that it tied its moral claim unambiguously to a specific social doctrine, since in doing so it exposed itself to the reproach that it melded its eternal values with contemporary social forms—that is, the holy with the profane.

There were, I believe, well-founded elements in the attacks that the socialists of the nineteenth century directed against the church hierarchy. The stance of the Church in the face of social change and the fate of the poor and abused was worthy of criticism. We err, however, when we say that the Church thought only about another world, or that it should have concentrated more on temporal life and suffering. On the contrary, it is more truthful to say that the Church was too much a prisoner of existing social structures, and often gave the impression that these structures were definitively based upon unchangeable Christian values.

Christianity is continuously threatened by the same temptation, but coming in two opposing variations. It doesn't involve forgetting the earth, but rather forgetting the unavoidably relative value of earthly affairs. Both variations further godlessness, in that they appear to fudge the boundary between the holy and the profane—or even to eliminate it. But there is nothing profane—no social or intellectual end—that Christianity would be better prepared than temporal powers to defend. However much Christianity may wish to engage the things of temporal politics and social conflicts, it nevertheless must perceive all temporal goods as relative. Yet neither can the Church be entirely apolitical, since it is, after all, an organ of culture. It must therefore remain vigilant about refusing to identify itself with any existing political organization or movement.

The old ties between the Church and temporal social orders were just as dangerous for the cause of Christianity as the new attempts to connect the Christian idea with the political ideologies of revolutionary messianism. Neither of these tendencies fulfills the hope of a renewal in the vitality of the Christian message. In both we sense the temptation to subordinate this message to temporal ends—that is, to the temptation to transform God into a tool, a potential object of human manipulation. The (weakened but not yet dead) theocratic tendency—the disastrous, unsuccessful hope that humanity could be led to redemption through coercion—and the apparently opposing effort to subordinate Christian values to this or that revolutionary ideology run together in their fundamental point of view. Both transform God into an instrument of ends that, whether justified or not, may never be considered final from a Christian perspective. Each of them runs the risk of converting the Christian community into a political party. Therefore both represent an inner corrosion of Christianity. It has always been the case that the greatest threat comes from the enemies within the walls.

Described so generally, the situation does not appear new. The entire history of Christian teaching can be considered an unending struggle over the boundary line between the sacred and the profane. The strongest spiritual revolutions that appear as interruptions in this history were usually attempts to stop the process of profanization, to give Christianity back its original calling, and to work against its domination by temporal interests. Such upheavals were never without a price and never completely successful. The danger could never finally be set aside because it lies in the nature of Christianity itself, in the eternal tension between its temporal and its sacral self-interpretation. The Church is and must remain both a repository of Godly grace and at the same time an organism existing in this world, culturally determined, historically modified, and acting with temporal means.

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We have the Gospels to bear witness to solidarity with the poor, with the oppressed, with the unfortunate, and with the defenseless—we do not have a Gospel to announce the promise of an earth without evil, without suffering, and without conflicts. We have Gospels to damn those who, in their comfort and their glory, remain deaf to the suffering and the hunger of the disinherited—we have no Gospel to preach social equality or inequality, or to prescribe a recipe for a complete social system through which all human drives and desires are fulfilled and all frustrations are set aside. We have Gospels to denounce tyrants and persecutors—we have no Gospel with which to make a pact with one form of tyranny against another in the name of chiliastic dreams. A Christianity in which it is quietly accepted that God stands ready to serve us, to protect any kind of cause, doctrine, ideology, or political party, is disguised godlessness.

In this sense one can say that both the inherited theocratic tendency and Christian "progressivism" have furthered dechristianization. What people seek in religion is—mirabile dictu—God, and not the justification of political values or "scientific" explanations of nature. Christianity that bows down before intellectual and political fashions in the search for momentary success participates in its own destruction. It can never match or surpass science in the application of scientific criteria to Christian teaching. It can never match or surpass the promise of earthly happiness offered by political ideologies, and when it tries to do so it unavoidably shows its powerlessness and irrelevance. Christianity sees human fate in light of the Gospels and the Book of Job—and not in the categories that theocratic, technocratic, or revolutionary utopias have formulated.

Perhaps—and this is of course only free speculation—dechristianization will in the long run prove itself favorable to the cause of Christianity. It should not be horrifying that a Christianity that was accustomed to being identified with power politics and diplomatic intrigue on the one hand, and with fanaticism and raw clericalism on the other, has come to an end. Out of the painful but cleansing purgatory of a ruthless, profane history, perhaps a Christianity will emerge that is truer to its own spirit. Perhaps.

It is rightly said that Christianity must alter the language of its teaching and conform itself to transformations within civilization. It has done so without enormous difficulties more than once. In this process of adaptation the danger always arises that in the search for new forms the content will be forgotten. It appears to be the case that the European of today is mostly deaf to the conventional language of theology. That Thomism was of immense importance in cultural history no one can doubt. But as a conceptual framework in which we are able to capture the cosmos today, it has reached its limits.

The problem is not—as one often hears—that the traditional teaching is "incomprehensible" for contemporary people. There is no ground for the opinion that we have suddenly become dumb, that something that was understandable for the people of the Middle Ages has become inaccessible for us. What matters most is simply the distance between the daily life of our experience and the inherited theological idiom. The search for meaning in the world must not only take into account the order or disorder of the surrounding civilization—all of its components included—as its point of departure, but it must also be conscious of what expressions the permanent presence of evil in human fate take in the specific disturbances, sufferings, and worries of that civilization.

We urgently prayed to God to leave the world. This He has done, at our request. A gaping hole remains. We constantly pray to this hole, without result. No one answers. We are angry or disappointed. Is this a proof of the nonexistence of God?

What is new in our experience? Evil? It was always with us and came from us. Is it really much greater than before? Occasionally we ask rhetorically: Where was God in Auschwitz, in Kolyma, with all the genocide, torture, war, and atrocity? Why did He remain idle? But that is a bad question. Apart from the fact that the monstrous horrors that humans have carried out against humans were not unknown in any period of history, that genocide, bloodbaths, and torture always occurred, that evil—the evil in us—never ceases to work, we smuggle into such a question the idea of a God whose incessant duty it is, through miracles, to protect humans against their own evil and to make them happy despite their self-inflicted wounds. But a God who acts as a magical power in the service of our prevailing needs was never actually the God of Christian faith or the God of any other great faith—however frequently such impressions appear in folk religions. Otherwise one should expect that the early Christian martyrs would have immediately lost their faith, since God offered them no miraculous help to free them from the hands of their executioners. Belief in miracles was naturally always there, but so was the warning that one can never rely upon miracle.

No, Auschwitz and Kolyma are not the cause of godlessness. Many people succumb to the temptation to consider that, because such monstrosities were the work of godless people, they should be used in the defense of the cause of God. But this temptation is dangerous because history contains too much cruelty at the hands of the pious.

People of today who observe evil in their time are not moved by it to unbelief. The way in which they perceive evil is already determined by their unbelief, so that their perceptions of both evil and unbelief are reciprocally

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strengthened. The same holds for believers. They perceive evil in light of their faith, and so their faith will not in each moment be weakened, but rather affirmed. It is therefore not credible that evil in our time makes the presence of God doubtful. There is no compelling logical or psychological connection.

The same is also true for science. Even if Pascal discovered with horror the "eternal silence" of infinite Cartesian space, both silence and the language of God are indeed in the ear of the one who listens. His presence or absence is in belief or unbelief, and each of the two, once acquired, will necessarily be affirmed by all observations.

The meaning of the godless Enlightenment has still not been revealed, because the breakdown of old belief and of the Enlightenment—before our eyes and in our souls—is reflected simultaneously. Do we live in a "transition period"? To say this is almost tautological: there have never in history been anything other than transition periods. But where are we transiting to? That we cannot know. One can plausibly claim that the Enlightenment, together with its godlessness, was the condition of all the intellectual and technical achievements of modernity. And yet the "uneasiness with the Enlightenment" now becomes ever more tangible. Was Carl Gustav Jung right when he said that in mythological archetypes, God's death always precedes His resurrection? Do we therefore live in the horrible time between Friday and Sunday, during which the Redeemer, already dead and not yet resurrected, visits hell? We also cannot know that. We are sure only of our own insecurity.

Finally, a point about coincidences. Consider the following historical counterfactuals:

- In the year 490 B.C., the Persian army, as expected, annihilated the much weaker infantry of the Athenians at Marathon.

- In the year 44 B.C., the fifty-six-year-old Julius Caesar followed the advice of the seer Spurinna and did not go to the Senate.

- In A.D. 33, to Pontius Pilate's question of who should be released, the mob in Jerusalem cried: "Jesus!"

- In the year 1836, the eighty-year-old Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart died in Vienna.

- On December 22, 1849, a young Russian named Fyodor Mikhail Dostoevsky was shot to death for his revolutionary acts in St. Petersburg.

- On August 30, 1918, Fania Kalpen shot Vladimir Ilyich Lenin to death.

- In August 1920, Marshal Pilsudski made a small mistake, resulting in the Red Army occupying first Warsaw, then Poland, then Germany.

- In the year 1938, Adolph Hitler died of a heart attack.

- In the year 1963, Joseph Stalin died.

What does all this have to do with God?

History is woven out of tiny coincidences. That means that if there is a plan and a reason in history, it can only be God's plan and God's reason. None of us knows what it might be. But we cannot hope to abandon the desire to know.

After we became aware of the emptiness of historical coincidences, they became our own, internal emptinesses. Is all this banal? Certainly. The cause of belief along with that of unbelief is banal, because it is ubiquitous.

For the unbeliever, concern about God is a disguised worry about the world. For the believer, concern for the world is a disguised concern about a God who is not known to the self. For both, however, the world is shot through with restlessness. It is a restlessness that, rightly interpreted, reveals that the victory of the godless and self-satisfied Enlightenment cannot ever be secure or complete. Its so-called victory is so consumed with ambiguity and contradiction, and its successes have brought so many new uncertainties, that our era can only rightly be described as apparently godless. Godlessness feverishly attempts to replace the lost God with something else. Enlightened humanism proposes a religion of humanity. Already Nietzsche saw through the vanity of such artificial replacements. The followers of Comte and Feuerbach in the twentieth century—such as Erich Fromm or Julian Huxley—sound the least convincing of all the godless.

God can of course be shoved aside as morally dangerous, denied as inaccessible to reason, damned as the enemy of humanity, and excommunicated as the source of enslavement. But if the Absolute were truly forgotten it would be unnecessary to replace it with some finite substitute. But, of course, the Absolute can never be forgotten. The unforgettableness of God makes Him present, even in rejection. FT

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The Women of *Roe v. Wade*

Mary Ann Glendon

To understand fully the incalculable effects of *Roe v. Wade* it is necessary (though of course not sufficient) to understand the historical and legal context in which it occurred. When the decision came down in February 1973, the nation was embroiled in the Vietnam War and President Nixon had just begun his second term. Just around the corner, but unforeseen by any of us, were the fall of Saigon and the President's resignation. Nor did most of us perceive how, all around us, the social environment was being transformed by a sudden breakdown in traditional norms governing sexual behavior and a sharp rise in family disruption. It would be years before professional demographers took the full measure of that cultural revolution, and when they did, even they were startled. Here is how one of them, looking back on the period, summarized what happened: "It is exceedingly rare in the history of populations that sudden changes appear across the entire set of demographic indicators. Yet in barely fifteen years, starting in 1965, the birth rate and the marriage rate in all the industrialized countries tumbled, while divorces and births outside marriage increased rapidly. All those changes were substantial, with increases or decreases of more than 50 percent."

With hindsight, we can now see that in February 1973, the U.S. (along with other affluent nations) was a few years into a massive social experiment. No society was prepared for that experiment, and no society has yet adjusted to its consequences. It was in that time of social and political turmoil that a pair of cases involving abortion were presented to the Supreme Court. The better known case, *Roe v. Wade*, challenged an old Texas statute that banned abortion except where the mother's life was in danger. The other, *Doe v. Bolton*, challenged a more modern statute patterned on the Model Penal Code drafted by the prestigious American Law Institute. The statute in *Doe* permitted abortion under certain conditions, but subjected it to regulation.

Though *Roe* got all the attention, I think it is fair to say that *Doe*, decided on the same day, was the more ominous of the two decisions. It was *Doe* that signaled the doom of legislative efforts to provide even modest protection of unborn life—statutes of the type that are in force in most other liberal democracies (where the regulation of abortion has largely been left to be worked out in the ordinary democratic processes of bargaining, education, persuasion, and voting). And it was *Doe*'s broad definition of "health" as "well-being" that the Court would later use to strike down even bans on the cruel procedure known as partial-birth abortion.

Among legal scholars, what attracted the most attention about *Roe* and *Doe* were the separation of powers and federalism issues. Leading constitutional lawyers such as Paul Freund and Archibald Cox were critical of the Court majority for striking down the statutes of all fifty states with so little warrant in constitutional text or precedent. Even Court watchers who favored legislative liberalization of abortion law were inclined to agree with dissenting Justice Byron White that the case represented an extraordinary judicial power grab. As for pro-life lawyers, most of them did not foresee how far the Supreme Court would extend *Roe* and *Doe* over the years—even to the point of striking down laws designed to protect late-term, healthy, viable babies. For years, the pro-life movement poured much of its energy into litigation, confident that *Roe* and *Doe* would eventually be limited, if not expressly overruled.

To be sure, there were a few visionaries, but their fears were generally dismissed. Who but a madman or a

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prophet would have imagined, as novelist Walker Percy did, that a whole industry of profitable "Qualitarian Centers" would spring up, where, as one of Percy's characters explained, doctors would respect "the right of an unwanted child not to have to endure a life of suffering"? Who but a madman or a prophet—or an artist who sees more deeply into things than the rest of us—would have imagined, as Percy did in a 1971 novel, that state governments might recognize a right to die, and that arrangements would be made for the sick and elderly to push a button that would waft them away into a "happy death" in Michigan, a "joyful exitus" in New York, or a "luanalu-hai" in Hawaii?

It's something of a puzzle why the public has never really grasped how extreme the legal treatment of abortion is in the United States. (Even Sweden, the poster country for women's equality and liberal attitudes toward human sexuality, strictly regulates abortion after the eighteenth week of pregnancy.) Two factors, I believe, combined to obscure the degree to which the U.S. has become careless about protecting human life at its fragile beginnings and endings. First, journalists and other opinion leaders have persisted in misdescribing *Roe v. Wade* as a case that permits abortion in the first trimester of pregnancy, but permits regulation thereafter. That is a flagrant misstatement, for *Roe* permits *no* regulation in the interest of protecting the unborn child for the first *two* trimesters. Moreover, when *Roe* is read with *Doe*, third-trimester restrictions are effectively ruled out as well—for *Roe*'s dictum that such restrictions might be permissible if they did not interfere with the mother's health was negated by *Doe*'s definition of "health" as "well-being."

The second factor that enabled the radical character of these decisions to pass under the radar is that most people just couldn't believe the Supreme Court would do such a thing. When I have explained the extreme permissiveness of American abortion law to people, one of the most common reactions is: "That can't be right." I've found that most people—including many law professors—have a great deal of difficulty wrapping their minds around the idea that the Court would permit the intentional destruction of a healthy infant who was capable of living outside his or her mother's body, when the mother's health (in the ordinary meaning of that word) is not in serious danger. That's why polls show that the same people who say they approve of *Roe v. Wade* also say they believe that abortion should not be permitted except for grave reasons, and that it should never be permitted after viability except to save the mother's life.

What finally helped to raise public consciousness was the most shocking decision thus far, *Stenberg v. Carhart* (2000), in which the Court struck down a state statute that would have banned partial-birth abortion. By 2000, technology had advanced to the point where many parents proudly displayed ultrasound photos of pre-born babies. Thus, Justice Stephen Breyer's callousness about something so close to infanticide highlighted as never before the discrepancy between the rigid, lethal logic of the Court majority and the more complex moral sentiments of most Americans.

One other aspect of the history of the 1973 decisions demands comment. When reading *Roe* and *Doe*, it is surprising to see how little they have to say about protecting women and how much they have to do with protecting doctors. That is because much of the pressure for these decisions came from the medical profession. By 1973, with the sexual revolution well underway, licensed doctors were increasingly performing elective abortions for their patients, but they were worried about criminal and civil liability. Justice Harry Blackmun, who had been counsel for the Mayo Clinic, wrote much of the majority opinion in *Roe* at the Mayo Clinic library. As is well known, he grounded the decision on the supposed "right to privacy" in the physician-patient relationship. It was not until years later that the Court majority described abortion as a woman's right, and then shifted in *Casey v. Planned Parenthood* (1992) from the much-criticized privacy ground to treating abortion as an individual liberty.

Part of what emboldened the Court majority to go as far as it did in the line of cases extending *Roe* and *Doe* was the embrace of unlimited abortion rights by the peculiar form of feminism that took shape in the 1970s. To earlier feminists who had fought for the vote and for fair treatment in the workplace, it had seemed obvious that the ready availability of abortion would facilitate the sexual exploitation of women. Women like Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton regarded free love, abortion, and easy divorce as disastrous for women and children. They would have regarded women who actively promoted those causes as foolish or deranged.

What made 1970s feminism such an anomaly was a puzzling combination of two things that don't ordinarily go together: anger against men and promiscuity; man-hating and man-chasing.

I remember that it was around this time that some of my students at Boston College Law School began to ask me if I was a feminist. My answer, then and now, is yes—if that means I am specially concerned about a range of issues that disproportionately affect women. But, as the mother of three young children in those days, I had to admit I was baffled by the groups that were purporting to speak for women. Organized feminism had almost nothing to say to women like me who were trying to juggle work and family obligations. In fact, many of its spokeswomen went out of their way to denigrate marriage and motherhood. Moreover, as a lawyer, I could

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see that the chief beneficiaries of the divorce reforms they backed so enthusiastically were ex-husbands and second wives.

The feminism of the 1970s was decisively shaped by a demographic phenomenon that brought heartbreak and disappointment to two large groups of women. The first group was the cohort of women born in the early years of the post-World War II baby boom. These young women were caught in what demographers call the "marriage squeeze"—the shortage of potential mates that resulted from the sharp jump in birthrates that began in 1947. There simply were not enough baby boys born during the war years to provide husbands for the bumper crop of girls born in 1947, '48, and '49 (given the then-custom for women to marry men a year or two older than themselves). When these girls started dating (in the 1960s), there were *1.7 million more* of them than there were men in the age group where they ordinarily would have expected to find husbands. Just imagine what a painful experience that must have been for young women who had been socialized for domesticity, girls who had grown up in the 1950s to expect life as it was portrayed in the *Ladies Home Journal* and *Good Housekeeping*. They had no idea why things weren't working out the way they were supposed to.

The increased competition for mates, coinciding with the arrival of the birth control pill, helps to explain a number of things, such as the collapse of sexual taboos as young women began to offer free samples and to pursue men previously considered off limits (such as other women's husbands). The ripple effects were vast and affected nearly everyone. Inevitably, there were abuses by men of their suddenly dominant position in the mating market. Many women of Betty Friedan and Bella Abzug's generation found themselves alone and in difficult circumstances when their husbands divorced them to marry younger women. That created a second large group of angry women, and 1970s feminism was off to the races.

The unusual conditions that gave rise to that particular form of feminism have long since passed, and thus it is hardly surprising that most women today are looking for something more responsive to their needs and aspirations. Betty Friedan, the smartest of the old guard, was the first of their number to see the writing on the wall. In a 1996 piece for the *New Yorker*, she warned organized feminism that "as a number of recent polls have made clear, the urgent concerns of women today are not gender issues but jobs and families." Two years later in *Time*, she again advised official feminism to get over its fixation with gender, saying, "All the sex stuff is stupid. The real problems have to do with women's lives and how you put together work and family."

Friedan was right that problems of work and family are central concerns of many women, and there are signs that she and others have succeeded in moving the feminist establishment to pay closer attention to those matters. But old-line feminism still has a tin ear for listening to women with children, as evidenced by their main solution to the problem of combining work and family life: the socialization of child care. Ironically, the old feminism brought to light how much of women's work has been undervalued, but then bought into that very same disrespect by acting as though the only work that matters is market work.

It's no wonder that four out of five young women today are so turned off by these negative attitudes toward men, marriage, and motherhood that they reject even the term "feminism." The title of Elizabeth Fox-Genovese's book *Feminism Is Not the Story of My Life*, taken from her interviews with dozens of women in all walks of life, says it all.

It is now apparent to nearly everyone that what Betty Friedan calls the "sex stuff" does matter, and that it matters very much. As the bills for the sexual revolution pile up, it looks as if the late nineteenth and early twentieth century feminists were closer to the mark. The price for the nation's prolonged bacchanal has been high, especially for women and children. There's been a high cost in terms of women's health, including an epidemic of infertility caused by sexually transmitted infections, and a startling rise in cervical and oral cancers among young women from the same cause.

Most women have understood all along that *Roe v. Wade* would not, as Friedan once predicted, "make women whole." For the past thirty years, all three leading polling organizations have consistently told us that a large majority of Americans, women even more than men, disapprove of the majority of abortions that are performed in this country. In recent years, that disapproval has increased significantly. The latest Zogby poll, reported in November 2002, reveals not only that Americans in general are becoming more conservative in their views about abortion, but that young people are significantly more pro-life than their parents. The strongest supporters of abortion rights in the United States, as any nineteenth-century feminist could have predicted, are not women—but men in the age group of eighteen to twenty-five. Nevertheless, the most pro-life part of the population is people under thirty.

Why, then, a curious person might ask, has that widely shared sentiment not tempered the extremism of American abortion law? In part it's probably because the Supreme Court has left so little room for expression of popular will through legislation. In part it's probably also because so much confusion exists about what the law really says. But there may be other,

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deeper reasons. With almost a million-and-a-half abortions a year for thirty years, we have become a society where nearly everyone has been touched by abortion, if not personally, then through friends and family members. When we speak about abortion today, we are speaking to women who have had abortions; to men who have asked women to have abortions; to young people who have lost brothers and sisters to abortion; and to the mothers and fathers, friends and neighbors of those women and men. That knowledge often leaves us tongue-tied, at a loss for words, for what to say and how to say it.

That knowledge has made it tempting for countless women and men to take refuge in slogans like: "Who am I to be judgmental?" and the famous "Personally, I'm opposed, but I can't impose my opinions on others."

I have to admit that, back in the 1970s, I was rather uncritical of such phrases. I remember asking the former dean of Boston College, a Jesuit priest, "Father, what do you think about this abortion issue?" He said, "Well you see, Mary Ann, it's very simple. According to Vatican II, abortion is 'an unspeakable moral crime.' But in a pluralistic democracy, we can't impose our moral views on other people." "Oh," I said, "OK."

I know this story doesn't reflect any credit on me, but I mention it to show that many of us just didn't focus on the issue all that closely. I know now that I should have questioned the word "impose." But it took some time before growing numbers of Catholics, Protestants, and Jews stepped forward to point out that when people advance their moral viewpoints in the public square, they are not imposing anything on anyone. They are proposing. That's what citizens do in a democracy—we propose, we give reasons, we vote. It's a very strange doctrine that would silence only religiously grounded moral viewpoints. And it's very unhealthy for democracy when the courts—without clear constitutional warrant—deprive citizens of the opportunity to have a say in setting the conditions under which we live, work, and raise our children.

It was only after I started to look into how controversial issues like abortion and divorce were handled in other liberal democracies that I realized how my dean's slogan has been used not only to silence religiously grounded views, but to silence all opposition to abortion. I should have asked the dean why citizens should have to withhold their moral views on abortion but not on other issues where he did not hesitate to advance religiously grounded moral viewpoints—the Vietnam War, capital punishment, civil rights, and relief of poverty. Years later, I put a related question to the former dean of Harvard Law School. In the mid-1980s, after I had given a talk to the Harvard faculty comparing American abortion law unfavorably with the approaches taken in several other liberal democracies, Dean Al Sacks took me out for lunch and said, "You know, no one in that room agrees with you." Since he had put the point in a friendly, avuncular way, I asked him about something that had long puzzled me. "Why," I asked, "did you and so many other constitutional lawyers stop criticizing the Court's abortion decisions after most of you had been highly critical of *Roe v. Wade*?" He sighed and gave me a very candid answer that had the ring of truth. "I suppose," he said, "it was because we had been made to understand that the abortion issue was so important to the women in our lives, and it just did not seem that important to most of us."

Today, thirty years after *Roe* and *Doe*, polls tell us that the abortion issue is still more important to women than to men. But they also tell us that women's and men's views have changed. For one thing, many of the unintended consequences of the cultural revolution of which these decisions were part have come into clearer view. There is growing awareness that the moral ecology of the country has suffered something like an environmental disaster, and that we are faced with a very complicated clean-up operation.

What makes that task especially difficult now is that the social changes of the past four decades have taken a heavy toll on the nation's human capital. We now live in a culture in which about half of all marriages end in divorce; in which nearly half of all children spend part of their childhood in fatherless homes; in which women and men who put their families first are falling behind economically and professionally; in which many of the nation's youngest citizens are starving for parental time and attention, and often for basic material necessities.

Moreover, though old-line, hard-line feminism has little appeal for today's women, its ideology lives on in law and policy—like light rays from a dead star. The cohort of women most captivated by that ideology now holds influential positions, and the organizations that promote the worst ideas of 1970s feminism continue to be handsomely bankrolled by its chief beneficiaries—the vast, profit-making abortion industry, the sex industry, and the organizations that promote aggressive population control.

Fortunately, however, the times are changing. There are signs that new forms of feminism are emerging to tackle the challenge of renewing the culture. We are hearing more voices of women who are in touch with the real-life needs and aspirations of a broad range of women. We are hearing more voices of women who regard men and women as partners rather than antagonists in the eternal quest for better ways to love and work. We are hearing enough to give us hope that a collaborative, creative effort is underway—an effort to promote a moral ecology that is in keeping with American traditions of welcoming the stranger, caring for the

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weak and vulnerable, lending a helping hand to the needy, and giving a fresh start to someone who got off on the wrong track.

Skeptics might say that that hope is misplaced. Perhaps so, but hope may be all that we have in an otherwise daunting time. FT

Atque Vale

after Catullus 101

From Georgia, through South Carolina,
North Carolina, around Greenville and Charlotte,
across the Tugaloo River, and the Broad,
the Catawba, the Yadkin and the New,
through two storms, one thick yet brittle,
the other soft, collecting on the windshield like tears,
over one night,
here I am, flowers in hand,
looking for the little brass plate
that, till they get the stone, marks your spot. Here:
flowers and I, the weak November sun, real tears.
Pointless words, no one around Tuesday afternoon
to hear them, you can't—Psalm 23,
Cardinal Newman's prayer: " . . . the shadows lengthen
and the evening comes, and the busy world," and so forth.
A few curses. More unwanted tears.
I'm spending tonight with friends in Roanoke.
Then home again. "I won't be back," I say
to the air, though who knows? "Godspeed,"
I add, though why I don't know,
and I turn to walk back to the car,
as the shadows lengthen and the evening comes,
and the busy world, and so forth.

R. S. Dietrich

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Hume, Austen, and First Impressions

Rodney Delasanta

"Saint David," his friends in Scotland and England called David Hume. And in France, where he spent some years as secretary in the British Embassy during the reign of Louis XV, he was called "le bon David." It is easy to understand why. When Jean Jacques Rousseau alienated friends and critics alike with bizarre behavior that today would probably be diagnosed as paranoia, Hume invited Rousseau to come live with him in England. It took almost a year before Rousseau became unbearable even to saint David, and thus the attempt to provide his colleague sanctuary from bitterly failed friendships in Paris and Geneva—such as those with Diderot and the Baron von Grimm—came to naught. But the invitation and hospitality were magnanimous and earned Hume considerable repute among the philosophers.

"Tender-hearted" is the phrase from William James that comes to mind in describing Hume's benevolence. Yet when we move from his practical ethics to his radical empiricism, "tender-hearted" must give way to its Jamesian contrary: "tough-minded." For it is hardly an overstatement to claim that philosophy has never recovered from Hume's tough-minded uprooting of metaphysics from its preeminent place in the traditional philosophical landscape. Indeed, *après moi le déluge* could have been as aptly applied to him as it was to Louis XV, his almost exact contemporary. Recall the devastating last paragraph from his *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*: "If we take in our hand any volume of divinity or school metaphysics . . . let us ask, *Does it contain any abstract reasoning concerning quantity or number?* No. *Does it contain any experimental reasoning concerning matter of fact and existence?* No. Commit it then to the flames: for it can contain nothing but sophistry and illusion." Kant, who credited Hume with awakening him from his dogmatic slumbers, tried to snatch any future metaphysics from the bonfire that Hume ignited, though with only limited success; and Hegel, contra Kant, rammed through a metaphysics that eventually collapsed under the weight of its own Prussian improbabilities.

But when the smoke finally cleared, Hume emerged the Pyrrhic victor, for it is his heirs who have called most of the shots in what is left of philosophy in our time. To metaphysical questions like "Does God exist?" or "Is the will free?" or "Is the soul immortal?" many of the greatest modern philosophers have answered with Wittgensteinian improvisations on Hume: "We cannot think what we cannot think; so what we cannot think we cannot say either." Or, more mysteriously, "What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence." An honest appraisal, some would say, of the limitations of human reason, but hardly a celebration of philosophical achievement. Oddly enough, while many analytical philosophers in our day hesitate, in homage to Hume, to construct even the simplest proposition for fear of falling into self-inflicted traps of metaphysical "nonsense," their physicist colleagues, less fussy about the theoretical limits of human knowledge, peer through their Hubble telescope at infinity.

At the risk of reducing the complexity and humanity of Hume's thought, especially his later essays and his six-volume *History of England*, to what a maverick such as Mortimer Adler called a "philosophical mistake," I intend, first, to revisit what seems to be the problematic first principle upon which Hume's radical empiricism depends, and then to enlist among the animadverters that most unlikely of respondents, Jane Austen.

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Early in the *Enquiry*, Hume makes the startling epistemological claim, over and over, that "the most lively thought is still inferior to the dullest sensation" because "all our ideas or more feeble perceptions are copies of our impressions or more lively ones." And again: "All ideas, especially abstract ones, are naturally faint and obscure," whereas "all impressions, that is, all sensations, either outward or inward, are strong and vivid." To test the validity of an idea, therefore, "we need but enquire *from what impression is that supposed idea derived*" (emphasis added). This Humean elevation of impression, or sensation, to primacy of epistemological place—and his correlative humbling of idea to "feeble" impression—undercuts the classical Aristotelian and Scholastic commonplace that what distinguishes human from animal knowledge is its power to universalize ideas from their source in sense impressions. True, Aristotle and Aquinas would have agreed with Hume that there is nothing in the intellect that is not first in the senses (there are no innate ideas in their epistemological quivers either), but they would have taken ardent issue with his notion that in transforming impression into idea the epistemological enterprise was becoming "enfeebled." On the contrary, the primacy of idea over sense impression, central also to Platonic thought, though not arrived at transempirically, is what had made possible any kind of truth claim about the human capacity to know itself, to know the world, or to know that which transcends the self and the world.

Moreover, if the qualitative distinction between idea and impression is reversed, no truth-claim—not even the self-evident one about cause and effect—remains tenable. The consequence is a debilitating nominalism which subverts the ancient maxim that the proper object of the intellect is the idea, the universal, freed from its unknowability in the senses, and then proceeds to credit that very unknowability as the criterion, or the boundary (to use Locke's term), of knowledge itself.

The major victim of Hume's radical empiricism, as historians of philosophy never tire of telling us, is the very knowability of the connection between cause and effect. Sense knowledge can tell us only that effect *follows* upon cause, because the mind, bounded by the senses, cannot legitimately infer any idea of causality from impressions of mere contiguity. Sequence, yes; causality no. As Hume writes,

> Suppose a person, though endowed with the strongest faculties of reason and recollection, to be brought on a sudden into this world; he would, indeed, immediately observe a continual succession of objects, and one event following another; but he would not be able to discover any thing farther. He would not, at first, by any reasoning, be able to reach the idea of cause and effect, since the particular powers, by which all natural operations are performed, never appear to the senses; nor is it reasonable to conclude, merely because an event, in one instance, precedes another, that therefore the one is the cause, the other the effect. Their conjunction may be arbitrary and casual.

Recall the implications of this interdiction of cause and effect on the enterprise of philosophy itself. Before Hume, most philosophers would have agreed that "to know" meant the same as "to know the causes of things." (Scientists to our own day naively continue to operate under this misconception.) Aristotle's metaphysical doctrine of the four causes—material, formal, efficient, and final—ranged from physical knowledge of phenomena to the Unmoved Mover itself. Aquinas extrapolated from causality to Uncaused Cause and even enlisted this profound metaphysical idea as a preamble to Revelation: from *ratio* to *fides*, as it were. After Hume's demolition of the idea of knowable causality, however, such Thomist preambles came to be considered quaint. Metaphysics had not only been severed from theology—the *ancilla* no longer in the queen's employ—but even from quotidian thought.

It is quotidian thought, however, sustained by what some have called metaphysical realism, that has a way of circling back through the pantry window even when it has been denied epistemological entry through the front door. According to Emile Myerson, "man practices metaphysics just as he breathes, without thinking about it." Gabriel Marcel agrees: "By the mere fact of our existing we are already up to our eyes in metaphysics." John Searle has said it better: "Metaphysical realism is not a thesis or a theory; it is rather the condition of having theses or theories or even of denying theses or theories. This is not an epistemic point about how we come to know truth as opposed to falsehood; rather it is a point about the conditions of the possibility of communicating intelligibly. Falsehood stands as much in need of the real world as does truth." To paraphrase Dostoevsky, without metaphysical realism, anything is permissible—even the trumping of ideas by sense impressions.

I have long thought that the best curative to Humean radical skepticism is the experiential witness of writers who often "know" better than professional philosophers themselves. (Paradoxically, even Hume seemed to "know" better when he was not writing epistemology and savaging metaphysics. As we can see from his later, more literary work, he did not let his empiricism blind

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him to human realities.) Jane Austen is such a writer who "knows" better, whose novels are admirable examples of metaphysical realism writ small—and exquisite. Like other writers disconcerted by reigning philosophical doctrines (Voltaire by Liebniz's, Blake by Newton's, Emerson by Locke's, Melville by Emerson's), Austen stands as a splendid corrective to the assumptions of radical empiricism. Whether she intended to or not, for example, the famous opening sentence of *Pride and Prejudice* controverts Hume's proposition that what little we know of truth is entirely indentured to sense impressions and that, beyond those sense impressions, no acknowledgment of universal truth is warranted. By simply writing her novels and expecting them to be read and understood, Austen seems to be saying that, although truth has its *ressourcement* in sense impressions, its accessibility and transmissibility are made possible by a process of intellection that concedes the legitimacy of universal propositions.

I am not the first to propose that Austen might well be enlisting Hume in the argument of her novel. A premier critic of Jane Austen, Tony Tanner, has opined that an intelligent woman like her, well read in the fiction of her time, could not but have read the reigning philosophers too, even though his own reading of *Pride and Prejudice* unaccountably enlists Hume as an epistemological ally of Austen rather than as a target. In any event, it seems that Hume's nimbus was present in Austen's choice of title before she settled on *Pride and Prejudice*. Tellingly, she originally called it *First Impressions*. What the novel teaches us is that impressions, however "strong and vivid," are hardly superior to ideas, however "faint and obscure." Strong and vivid—and immediate—are Elizabeth Bennet's disdainful impressions of Darcy's pride; equally so are Darcy's of Elizabeth's prejudice. But by the end of the novel they both sort out and think through those strong and vivid impressions, gradually discern their fallibility, fall deeply in love, and marry. In fact, despite Austen's characterization of Elizabeth as the most intellectually alert and morally sympathetic person in the novel, she is betrayed by other first impressions as well. Not only is she wrong about Darcy, she is also wrong about Wickham, whose attention she initially welcomed. But before long, Wickham is revealed to be the would-be seducer of Georgiana, Darcy's young sister, and the actual seducer of Lydia, Elizabeth's feather-brained sibling, whereas Darcy turns out to be the champion who quietly rescues the Bennet family from the disgrace of Lydia's mindless elopement. Darcy, of course, has his own fallible first impressions beyond his misapprehension of Elizabeth: he also errs in convincing his friend Bingley to break off relations with the splendid Jane, Elizabeth's sister, because of his first impressions of the Bennet family.

If Austen's original title of the lost first version of *Pride and Prejudice* can be read as a teasing animadversion against radical skepticism, its famous opening line—"It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife"—ironically recapitulates and subverts the formulaic phraseology of Hume's *Enquiry* itself. In Section V, for example, where he argues that rational indubitability is really the product of custom or habit, rather than of any justifiable inference of universals from particulars, Hume writes: "We only point out a principle of human nature, *which is universally acknowledged* and which is well known by its effects" (emphasis added). In Section VIII, "Of Liberty and Necessity," while questioning the traditional claims of free will, he writes, "*It is universally acknowledged* that there is a great uniformity among the actions of men . . . that human nature remains the same." And again, a few paragraphs later: " . . . readily and *universally do we acknowledge* a uniformity in human motives and actions as well as in the operations of body." Still later, when Hume argues that the simple conjunction of events should not be misinterpreted to constitute cause and effect, he writes "that this regular conjunction *has been universally acknowledged* among mankind" as causality. I count four more instances in the *Enquiry* of similar phraseology. Of course, Hume is *denying* that universal acknowledgment constitutes any admission of universal truth (because universal truths are patently unknowable), whereas Austen has taken the universal idea to be a metaphysical given and has proceeded to write fiction that dramatizes its knowability.

If the errancy of first impressions is the theme of *Pride and Prejudice*, it is the very leitmotif of Austen's later novel, *Emma*, judged by many to be her best. When a heroine of common sense like Elizabeth Bennet, *simpatica* both to her creator and to the audience for whom she was created, can for a time be victimized by first impressions, it is little wonder that Jane Austen would allow, nay encourage, some of her other heroines to follow suit. Wealthy, willful, and indulged by a doting and witless father, Emma's seemingly harmless vocation is matchmaking, at which she can boast an early success by having arranged the marriage of her governess to a widower neighbor. However, her attempt to couple her attractive but impoverished protegée, Harriet Smith, with the eligible village rector, Mr. Elton, turns out to be a comic mismatch that dominates a good deal of the plot. Harriet has already revealed an interest in Robert Martin, a responsible local farmer, but his low-born state immediately disqualifies him in Emma's eyes as a suitable partner for Harriet. In what turns out to be the first in a series of spectacularly errant first impressions,

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Emma totally misreads Martin's character: "He is very plain, undoubtedly . . . but that is nothing compared with his entire want of gentility. I had no right to expect much, and I did not expect much; but I had no idea that he could be so very clownish, so totally without air. I had imagined him, I confess, a degree or two nearer gentility."

Whereas in Austen's earlier novel it took two characters, Elizabeth and Darcy, to dramatize the follies of pride and prejudice, in *Emma* they are fused into a single character. Because she is proud of her wealth and social station, Emma benignly intends to extend its privileges, as much as society will allow, to her friend—for whom marriage to a mere farmer is unthinkable. Hence her prejudice against Martin, who for her is worthy of no more serious consideration than mindless first impressions. Of course, Harriet is mortified by Emma's hasty demolition of her intended, but she backs off and allows her affections to be redirected toward the unsuspecting Mr. Elton. Strangely, not only is Emma unaware of Elton's indifference to Harriet, but she is also oblivious to the court that Elton is paying to herself. That Austen is indicting the perils of first impressions is evident in her description of Emma's plan to scuttle Martin's bid for Harriet's hand in order to free her for Elton. Fearing that competing busybodies may already have considered the suitability of a match between Harriet and Elton, Emma comforts herself by thinking that no one else could have preceded her "in the date of the plan, as it had entered her brain during the very first evening of Harriet's coming to Hatfield." A rush to judgment, Emma's sagacious neighbor, Mr. Knightley, calls it, as he scolds her for "abusing the reason you have. . . . Better be without sense, than misapply it as you do," adding that Emma is speaking "nonsense, errant nonsense, as ever was talked!" Knightley will become Emma's husband by the end of the novel, of course, so this criticism of the woman he loves is reluctant and self-lacerating.

The Harriet/Elton imbroglio is not the only one in the novel. Emma is wrong in thinking that Frank Churchill is romantically interested in her, wrong in thinking that Knightley is romantically interested in Jane Fairfax, wrong in surmising the identity of the gift-giver in the case of Jane's pianoforte, wrong finally in thinking that Knightley is romantically interested in Harriet when in fact he is only interested in Emma herself. No other Austen heroine is so thoroughly victimized by her first impressions and the consequences thereof. The novel is a veritable comedy of errors but especially a comedy of failed first impressions, "strong and vivid" though they may be, that are contravened by Jane Austen's metaphysical realism, "faint and obscure" as it allegedly is.

One can surmise why David Hume would have thought it necessary to mount such a devastating campaign against metaphysics (while elsewhere feeling quite comfortable making all kinds of phenomenological generalizations about a range of human experiences, events, thoughts, and feelings) or why Jane Austen, if I am reading her right, would have taken cryptic novelistic issue with his brand of radical empiricism. It was a de rigueur stance for the philosophes of the day, of course, beholden as they were to the empirical method of science, to vilify metaphysics and metaphysicians. Voltaire's witty derision is typical: "Metaphysicians are like curious travelers who having entered the antechamber of the harem of the Grand Turk and having observed from a distance the comings and goings of a eunuch, would venture to guess how many times His Highness had caressed his odalisque that night." Perhaps the rationalists from Descartes to Malebranche and Leibniz had so overstated their metaphysical claims that Voltairian sallies and Humean enquiries were inevitable. When Pangloss comes, can Martin the Manichee be far behind?

But these putative epistemological correctives, it seems to me, mask a not-so-hidden agenda among the radical empiricists. Peter Gay has described the character of the Enlightenment as neo-pagan, less in the sense of moral dereliction than in its fulminations against Christianity. "Thou hast conquered, O pale Galilean," Swinburne could still lament a century later in the spirit of the Enlightenment, "the world has grown gray from thy breath." Most Enlightenment intellectuals would have agreed that one solution to the ills of mankind was to *écraser l'infâme*, Voltaire's injunction to crush the "infamous thing"—that is, Christianity. (They must have rejoiced to see half their wish granted when the Jesuits were suppressed in 1773.)

As for Hume's motives, one suspects that his agnosticism was less the consequence of his radical empiricism than his radical empiricism was the consequence of his agnosticism. The latter seems more likely, especially as the targeted *infâme* was Catholicism, which Hume held in contempt. In the *Enquiry* he called Catholics "devotees of superstition" and Catholic liturgy "mummeries." Moreover, because Catholicism had for centuries based its apologetics on a synthesis of faith and reason, one manner of contributing to the Enlightenment's crushing of the *infâme* was to demolish its metaphysical supports. If God's existence was putatively demonstrable by arguments from causality, then severing the epistemological connection between cause and effect would, higher up the great chain of being, unlink the idea of First Cause from the idea of God and do collateral violence to any attendant metaphysical speculation. Hence Hume writes: "We can never be allowed to mount up from the universe, the

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effect, to Jupiter, the cause; and then descend downwards, to infer any new effect from that cause." But then, as if to distance himself from the implications of this dislocation, he implores philosophers to leave religion to the fideists: "Our most holy religion is founded on *Faith*, not on reason; and it is a sure method of exposing it to put it to such a trial as it is, by no means, fitted to endure."

It is a familiar argument with respect to religion: fides, si; ratio, no. Descartes used something like it in his *Discourse on Method*, but one senses that there was actually some faith left in Descartes' fideism. A century later, however, despite Hume's honorific description of Christianity as "our most holy religion," the remnant of his faith was clearly gone; he spends the rest of the passage cryptically mocking Christianity's most sacred beliefs, not only the miracles from the Old Testament but also the chief miracle from the New, the Resurrection itself.

Jane Austen, like Samuel Johnson before her, belonged to a different Enlightenment, one that did not seek to enlighten by extinguishing the Light. The daughter of an Anglican clergyman, she was well aware of the failures of Christianity and even took some delight in satirizing its less than holy ministers, like the Rev. Collins and Mr. Elton. But in any final analysis she was a believer whose faith, though not shouted from the housetops, nevertheless remained firm. The editors of the 1998 Norton critical edition of *Mansfield Park* saw fit, for example, to reprint one of her three prayers that have survived, probably via her sister, Cassandra. In it, she does not compromise those Christian doctrines embarrassing to so many Enlightenment intellectuals, as they were to Thomas Jefferson when he produced his miracle-free Bible, but confesses her faith openly and unambiguously: ". . . we implore Thee to quicken our sense of Thy mercy in the redemption of the world, of the value of that holy religion in which we have been brought up, that we may not, by our own neglect, throw away the salvation Thou hast given us, nor be Christians only in name." In a letter to her niece worried about the evangelical tendencies of a suitor, she writes unfideistically: "And as to there being any objection from his Goodness, from the danger of his becoming even Evangelical, I cannot admit that. I am by no means convinced that we ought not all to be Evangelicals and am at least persuaded that they who are so *from Reason and Feeling*, must be happiest and safest. . . . Don't be frightened by the idea of his acting more strictly up to the precepts of the New Testament than others" (emphasis added).

The most visible defense of the Christian way of life in her novels is the long exchange in *Mansfield Park* between Edmund Bertrand and Mary Crawford, his intended, in which Miss Crawford expresses dismay that a man like Edmund could possibly consider taking holy orders. We recall that the estimable Edward Ferrars also took Anglican orders in *Sense and Sensibility*, but with the exception of his foppish brother, Robert, there was no character in that novel to belittle his intention to do so—and thus force a Christian riposte. Mary Crawford's harsh judgments, by contrast, have the ring of the freethinker's salon about them, like Voltaire's Society of the Temple, or Franklin's Junto, or Hume's French coterie, and thus provoke an apologetic response from both hero and heroine of the novel.

A minister of the church, Mary Crawford complains to Edmund, prefers "an income ready made to the trouble of working for one, and [has] the best intentions of doing nothing all the rest of his days but eat, drink, and grow fat. . . . A clergyman has nothing to do but to be slovenly and selfish—read the newspaper, watch the weather, and quarrel with his wife. His curate does all the work, and the business of his own life is to dine." And then, training her guns on Dr. Grant, her brother-in-law clergyman who is at that very moment affording her his hospitality, she complains that he is "an indolent selfish bon vivant, who must have his palate consulted in every thing, who will not stir a finger for the convenience of any one, and who, moreover, if the cook makes a blunder, is out of humor with his excellent wife." Although this distemper is not equal to the sting of Voltaire's *écrasez*, it is clerical ridicule worthy of Diderot and his *Encylopedia*. But the theme of *Mansfield Park*, as Jane Austen herself identified it, is "ordination"—and Edmund's defense of his taking holy orders is not adventitious to the plot.

Indeed, it is Mary Crawford's unremitting anticlericalism that finally wears down Edmund's infatuation with her and convinces him that such a person could never become his wife. Her withering denunciation of Anglican orders—"At this rate, you will soon reform every body at Mansfield . . . and when I hear of you next, it may be as a celebrated preacher in some great society of Methodists, or as a missionary into foreign parts"—is the final indignity. Edmund pulls back from the expected marriage proposal—and from his first-impression infatuation with Mary Crawford—and after a time recognizes that his wife must be one who, like Fanny Price (and her creator as well), can respect and admire his own sacerdotal commitment.

Thus does Jane Austen seem to controvert, at least in generic terms, the premier British representative of the Enlightenment both with respect to metaphysics and to religion itself. Unwilling to obey the Humean imperative that would commit volumes of

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divinity or metaphysics to the flames, she is closer to the Christian humanism of her older contemporary, Samuel Johnson, who when asked by James Boswell what he thought of the radical empiricists, answered with less than his characteristic charity: "Hume and other skeptical innovators are vain men and will gratify themselves at any expense. Truth will not afford sufficient food to their vanity, so they have betaken themselves to error: Truth, Sir, is a cow which will yield such people no more milk, and so they are gone to milk the bull." Austen's response is less Johnsonian but no less artful. FT

The Concert

It offers many dividends:
The opportunity to meet
And chat with old and new-found friends;
The amiable atmosphere;
The comfortable cushioned seat;
The promise of two hours clear
Of irritating chores, restraints,
Dilemmas, quarrels, and complaints;
The vespertine impressive hall
That grants equality to all
And cover for a nap to some;
The stirring burst of warm applause
When the conductor comes in view
And talkers instantly grow dumb;
The pleasantly suspenseful pause
As the ensemble waits its cue.

Of course, it offers music, too.

William Walden

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Leon Kass and the Genesis of Wisdom

Alan Jacobs

Leon Kass' meditation on the wisdom of Genesis is expansive, curious, fascinatingly rich and digressive. This I claim without reservation, but my next claim begins with a qualifier: *to me*, it is also quite maddening. I emphasize the qualification because Kass didn't write the book for me, or people like me—that is, though Kass says that the book "is addressed to believers and nonbelievers alike," the latter group is likely to be more comfortable with Kass' discourse. This is not really a book for people who believe that Genesis is a sacred text with an unavoidable claim on their lives. Such people may learn much from the book, as I certainly did, but they are not its ideal audience. If we wish to discover whom this book is really written for, we might consider its title: Kass has written a primer for those who would begin the task of reading for wisdom. I must admire such a book; in the event, I find that I must also contend with it. But Kass' generous encounter with Genesis is so thoroughly undogmatic that I doubt he would mind my contentiousness.

The most surprising thing about this book is that Kass wrote it—or so, at least, he himself thinks. After all, he is by training a physician and a biochemist, and is best known for his incisive contributions to biomedical ethics. But he has long demonstrated a wide range of intellectual interests: witness (to take but one example) the collection of essays and reflections on marriage, *Wing to Wing, Oar to Oar*, that he recently edited with his wife, Amy Kass. Still, he himself raises the question, "How does a man of medicine and science, raised in a strictly secular home without contact with Scripture, come to write a book on the Bible?" He answers, "It is a mystery, even to the author"; but he suspects "that it all comes from a late-onset, dominant—and, I fear, lethal—rabbinic gene." This suspicion seems unwarranted, though, because Kass goes about his task in a way quite alien to traditional rabbinical commentary.

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The Beginning of Wisdom: Reading Genesis. By Leon Kass. *Free Press. 576 pp. $35.*

Kass' approach to Genesis owes little or nothing to the culture of the synagogue, and almost everything to the culture of the university seminar room—specifically, at the University of Chicago, where Kass has taught for many years, and where his interest in Genesis arose. First he taught it in a core course for undergraduates; then he explored it in informal meetings at his home with his wife, a faculty colleague, and a few interested students; but, though his interest grew and grew, he was reluctant to take the next step and offer a whole class of his own on the text. "Public teachers of the book, I then thought and still think, should be either biblical scholars or knowledgeable and religiously observant keepers of the tradition—preferably both—and I was neither." But eventually Kass came to believe that Genesis deserved to be taught in a way that neither the scholars nor the believers were likely to teach it: as a book that offers "wisdom," a book that has "an 'anthropology,' an account of the human being, embedded in its account of the good life." And if no one else at the University of Chicago was likely to teach Genesis in that spirit, he would have to be the one to do it.

Thus emerged a course, at first (in 1980) offering no college credit and populated by "handpicked students," but later offered openly and for credit, in which Kass and his students read Genesis "philosophically, solely for meaning and understanding, in search of wisdom." Now, in this book that has emerged from many years of discussion and reflection on the text, Kass freely admits that there is "a reason to be suspicious of a philosophical approach to the Bible"—indeed, more than one reason.

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Many of today's philosophers are likely to find Kass' belief in "reading for wisdom" naive and superannuated; and even those who sympathize with such a quest may well suspect the philosophical quality of the biblical narrative. Kass also recognizes that scholars dedicated to the textual history of the biblical books—their origins, developments, and later editorial transformations—may be congenitally suspicious of the belief that some unified picture of wisdom can emerge from these multiply redacted texts. Then there are those believers (and others) who point out that neither the Bible's "manner nor its manifest purposes are philosophical. Indeed, there is even good reason for saying that they are *anti*philosophical, and deliberately so." Finally, Kass tips his hat to his fellow scientists, who may well be skeptical not only of his project but also and equally of all the other opponents of it. There is something rather winning about the independence and cheerfulness with which Kass acknowledges these objections—and continues on his quest wholly unperturbed by them. Twenty years of experience tells him that wisdom may indeed be found in Genesis, if one seeks it in a philosophic spirit.

What, then, does a philosophical reading of Genesis look like, at least as Kass defines it? He claims, to start, that it means "reading without presuppositions or intermediaries," but he doesn't mean that. He certainly does have a presupposition, and he admits it: that wisdom may be found in this text. He states quite forthrightly that "to read in the spirit of thoughtful engagement"—which for Kass is a synonym for reading philosophically, reading for wisdom—requires "suspending disbelief and seeking reasons to trust." And he takes that position in part because of the "intermediaries" of past generations who have venerated Genesis and found reasons to trust it. In presupposing that Genesis contains value, Kass is practicing what Chesterton called "the democracy of the dead"—he's giving the ancestors their votes. So when he says that he wants to read Genesis "without presuppositions or intermediaries," what he really means is that his presuppositions are revisable and his intermediaries do not possess absolute authority: he does not come to the text with faith commitments that *require* him to find wisdom in the text and to obey its commandments insofar as he understands them. He is a pupil of the text, but not a disciple; he does not recognize it a priori as being binding upon him.

As a pupil, Kass seeks guidance from Genesis: his approach "attempts to understand the text in its own terms yet tries to show how such an understanding may address us in our current situation of moral and spiritual neediness." But how can the text be shown to address us, given its temporal, spatial, and cultural distance from us? At the outset of his book, Kass suggests some of the connections: "As were the protagonists in the world of Genesis, so are we today troubled by vexing questions of family life." "Contemporary concerns over unbridled technology are anticipated in the story of Babel." "Biblical Egypt should be of special interest for modern Americans." But given the distances that I mentioned, how can these connections be made to seem viable and unforced, richly appropriate comparisons rather than strained allegories?

To achieve his goal, Kass must discover a vocabulary that mediates between the biblical world and ours. He needs bridges, translators; and he finds them in the language of human problems and human self-understanding. Let me take but two among dozens of possible examples. Reflecting upon what, in accordance with most modern biblical criticism, he calls "the two creation stories" (roughly, the first and second chapters of Genesis), Kass sums up the lessons of the stories:

> In short, the first story challenges the dignity of the natural objects of thought and the ground of natural reverence; the second story challenges the human inclination to try to guide human life solely by our own free will and our own human reason, exercised on the natural objects of thought.

By "natural reverence" Kass means the persistent human tendency to worship the things of the natural world: "A main teaching—perhaps *the* main teaching—of Genesis 1 is the nondivinity of the cosmos, and in particular of the sun, the moon, the stars." Genesis 1 is determined to "demote the dignity of the cosmos," and, by extension, to refute the idea of "trying to orient human life on the basis of knowledge of nature." Similarly, the second chapter warns against intellectual and moral autonomy. Kass invites us to consider the problems that we modern humans have gotten ourselves into, collectively and personally, and to see if Genesis provides potential answers to those problems.

In a similar vein, Kass prefaces his account of the complex relationships among Noah and his sons by suggesting that the Genesis narrative wishes "to encourage the ambivalent male reader to participate vicariously in the fatherly education of the Hebrew patriarchs," first by showing him "precisely why such an education is needed" and then by "moving him to care about whether in fact it can be obtained." Kass explores the ways in which Noah acts both wisely and foolishly, and discerns in his sons "three fundamental human types":

> the tyrannical man or, alternatively, the man who is focused on sex and bodily pleasure [Ham]; the decent or noble man, the generous man of refined taste and sensibility [Japeth];

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> and the pious man, the man who takes his bearings from looking up to the divine [Shem].

And Kass suggests that we should consider these types in light of a similar typology offered by Aristotle in the *Nicomachaean Ethics*: the life of pleasure, the life of honor, and the life of contemplation.

If these two passages of commentary—on the creation narratives and on Noah—represent philosophical reading, then we may reasonably infer that philosophical reading strives to locate in the text whatever is universal to human experience, and to find ways of describing the particular experiences of particular people in the most broadly relevant terms possible. This requires abstracting the meaning of events from their narrative embodiment; indeed, one reflecting on Kass' procedure might even conclude that the culturally, historically, and narrationally distinctive is the enemy of philosophy, and must be winnowed like chaff.

And might not one readily defend such an approach, at least for the first eleven chapters of Genesis, which narrate the first stage of human history, and which are populated by the common ancestors of all later human beings? After all, the protagonist of the first story is *'adamah*—"the man" or "the human." That's as generic as a character can get. Moreover, by the time God brings down the tower of Babel we have still not yet entered the story of Israel itself—we have not yet even met the "father of believers," Abraham. Does not universal history warrant a universalizing mode of reading?

Perhaps. But we should never forget that the primal history of Genesis was composed, read, and interpreted by the people of Israel, and understood by them as the story of the covenant that constituted them and gave them communal life. Seen in the context of the whole of Genesis, and even more in the context of the whole Pentateuch, the first eleven chapters of Genesis are simply the prehistory of the Abrahamic covenant. It's not merely paradoxical to say that for the Israelites Adam is important primarily because he is the ancestor of Jacob, and that in this book the particular precedes and governs the universal. That key feature of Genesis 1 that Kass rightly points to—the "demoting of the dignity of the cosmos"—only makes sense when one understands that the Israelites were surrounded by people who worshiped the sun, moon, and stars. Their creation narrative is therefore a kind of indirect polemic against Israel's dangerous neighbors, an affirmation that the pagan gods are no more than big lights in the sky, attempts to placate which get you exactly nothing. (The unique combination of arrogance, gratitude, defensiveness, and fear that this situation produced has been imaginatively realized nowhere better than in Frederick Buechner's beautiful novel, *Son of Laughter*.) Now, Kass notes just this difference, but he characterizes it merely as a "rejection of polytheism"—as though what was at stake was the choice among a range of religious options, rather than the life or death of a people; and he is more interested in seeking ways of reading the story that "address our current situation of moral and spiritual neediness."

Kass pursues this task about as intelligently and resourcefully as it is possible to pursue it, but I worry about all the history that such an approach must skip over. I think first of the moment when Jacob, traveling between Beersheba and Haran, lays his tired head upon a stone and dreams of a great ladder with angels ascending and descending upon it. God speaks there to Jacob, and pronounces a promise rather different than the ones he had made to Abraham. To Abraham God had promised many descendants, with wealth and power for them, and had pledged to be their God always. But to Jacob He promises, "In you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 28:14, in the fine new English Standard Version). This promise would begin to be realized when Joseph lived in Egypt and brought blessing to that land; as a Christian, I believe its ultimate fulfillment comes in the person and work of Jesus Christ. But it is only once that promise works itself out, as the people of Israel bring the blessings of God's word and God's law into alien cultures, that the universal meaning of their sacred narratives becomes accessible to the rest of us.

From one who belongs to a covenant community, then, the appropriation of the biblical narrative must be done by *historical* rather than what Kass would call philosophical means. Our task is not to find a conceptual vocabulary that will allow us to build analogical bridges between the biblical text and our experience; rather, we must understand that we dwell in the same history that the people of Israel relate in the Pentateuch—a history that even the Law itself is but a part of. (As David Damrosch has written, "In its presentation of the Law within this vision of the redemptive potential of exile, Leviticus is the very heart of pentateuchal narrative.") Genesis is not *analogous* to our experience; it *is* our experience, in its historical aspect.

If this argument is right, then Kass' nonhistorical, analogical reading of Genesis isn't ideal even for the first eleven chapters of Genesis; therefore we should not be surprised when the patriarchal narratives pose rather a challenge for him. As all commentators do, Kass recognizes that the book of Genesis pivots quite dramatically when, having concluded the Babel story with its fragmentation of human society, it turns to a particular man named Abram. Here is how Kass describes the change:

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> The failure of the city and tower of Babel brings to a close Genesis' saga of universal human beginnings. Multiple nations arise as the necessary remedy for the proud and perilous project of humankind united. After and because of Babel, God abandons His plan to work simultaneously with the entire human race. But He in no way abandons His universal aspirations for human beings. On the contrary, He pursues the same ends but by different means. Having dispersed mankind into many nations, He now chooses one nation to carry His way as a light unto all the others, and He takes up a prominent role as that nation's educator and guide.

It is not a description I could wholly endorse; my understanding of God does not encourage me to imagine that the whole Babel crisis caught Him by surprise and occasioned some late-night strategic revisions in the heavenly office suite. (Kass would surely reply that his reading is consonant with the text itself; to which I would counter that that could be so only if we ignore the Israelite cultural situation in which the text was produced and to which it was addressed.) But in any event, Kass recognizes the shift in the narrative and must shift his own reading strategies accordingly. One can see this shift most obviously in the headings Kass gives to sections of his commentary. In the pre-Abram sections, those headings are often generalized and abstract, in keeping with the mediating or translating method of reading that Kass favors: "The Meanings of Sexual Complementarity," "Paternity and Piety: Noah and His Sons," "Rational Animal, Political Animal: Speech and the City." But after Babel, the descriptions mime the particularities of the narrative: "Abraham's Final Trial: the Binding of Isaac," "Pharaoh Gets the Message: Joseph Becomes Prime Minister," and so on. Kass must alter his interpretive strategy because the patriarchal narratives are full of events and decisions that cannot be translated into any sort of hermeneutical standard notation; it's often hard to say just what to make of them, at least in general terms, and certainly the narrative itself rarely gives us any pointers. In many cases in the second of the book's two parts, Kass seems forced to provide a kind of summary exposition interlaced with character sketches—something far less "philosophical" than the conceptual allegories he weaves when dealing with the book's first eleven chapters.

No passage in Genesis more notoriously resists interpretive strategies than the binding of Isaac. Indeed, it was just this story that Erich Auerbach, in his magisterial *Mimesis*, employed to distinguish the openness of Homeric poems from the "reticence" of Hebrew narrative, which by contrast is "fraught with background"—background that is never brought into the reader's field of vision. When Kass reaches Abraham's crisis he prefaces his treatment with a truly extraordinary confession:

> No story in Genesis is as terrible, as powerful, as mysterious, as elusive as this one. It defies easy and confident interpretations, and despite all that I shall have to say about it, it continues to baffle me. Indeed, my approach seems even to me to be too shallow, precisely because I am attempting to be reasonable about this awesome and shocking story.

I find it fascinating that, despite this confession of "shallowness," Kass does indeed continue to strive to "be reasonable." We might contrast this determination with the straightforward claim of Kierkegaard's Johannes de Silentio (the "author" of *Fear and Trembling*), who throws up his hands and declares, "Abraham I do not understand, in a certain sense there is nothing I can learn from him except astonishment." For Kierkegaard the story enacts a repudiation of anything recognizable as morality and therefore anything that could possibly be called "reasonable." If the philosophically minded must have a term for what this story presents us with, Johannes de Silentio is willing enough to provide one: "the teleological suspension of the ethical." The reasonableness of ethics must be suspended in favor of a greater *telos*: trust in Yahweh and His promises—which is not a reasonable thing to do, and may not even be recognizable to philosophy as a *telos*. Johannes' famous term is actually Kierkegaard's shrewd way of pointing to the irreconcilability of philosophy with biblical narrative.

If indeed Abraham's decision to trust Yahweh and lift the knife is definitively unreasonable, and if Kass knows—indeed, announces—that his approach to the story is "shallow," then how could his reading possibly be justified? To defend Kass here would seem to be difficult at best; and in light of what I have written so far I would scarcely be expected to do the defending. But that is just what I hope to do. For it is this most incomprehensible episode of Genesis that brings out the best in Kass; precisely because he knows that no conceptual algebra will solve this equation, he slows the pace of his analysis and allows the story to have its own mysterious and elusive way.

Throughout his reading, Kass is acutely attentive to the story's layers of knowledge. Isaac knows the least; Abraham knows only what he is commanded to do; we the readers know (as Abraham does not) that he is being "tested"; and God alone knows the precise purpose of the horrible test. A recognition of this epistemological complexity is itself sufficient to compel the

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thoughtful interpreter to avoid precipitous decisions. Above all, Kass is aware that the story's notorious reticences (especially concerning Abraham's thoughts and expectations) make multiple interpretations possible, and force the reader to reckon with them. Thus he enters here, more fully than elsewhere in his commentary, into the conversation about the story, quoting from a range of interpretations, even considering Michael Fishbane's argument that Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac means that he fails God's test. In this sense Kass is more rabbinical in dealing with the binding of Isaac than he is elsewhere in the book; here he joins wholeheartedly in the endless midrashic debate about "this awesome and shocking story."

Nevertheless, he does not follow the example of Johannes de Silentio and throw up his hands in incomprehension: though aware of the likelihood of "shallowness," he offers a reading—his best attempt at figuring it out, at finding a way of construing the narrative's force and purpose. He tries to see what, through this ordeal, God learns about Abraham and what Abraham learns about God. Whatever I or anyone else might think of the specifics of Kass' reading, in the circumstances his offering of it is a gesture both humble and brave.

One could even say that in Kass' treatment of the binding of Isaac we see the ethos of the university seminar room at its best. Though many professors fail to understand this point, the seminar room is not the place for a complete dismissal of the texts under scrutiny as patriarchal or racist or sexist or complicit in violence, or (for that matter) atheistic or blasphemous or immoral; nor is it a place for Johannes de Silentio's position, that the story can be accepted by faith and faith alone. Rather, the seminar room occupies an intellectual demilitarized zone, where the text is confronted, wrestled with, puzzled over; where interpretations are offered, perhaps tentatively or provisionally, then debated, revised, withdrawn, or renewed. In such an environment it is vital that such texts *not* be explored as though understanding them is a matter of life and death; and while people of passionate commitment (to faith or unbelief) may often be frustrated by such a deliberate lowering of the interpretive stakes—certainly I have often experienced that frustration—environments that encourage such detachment are socially beneficial. There need to be discursive spaces in our society (spaces that, when functioning properly, can constitute a healthy and vibrant "public sphere") where matters even of eternal life and death can be considered as though they were not quite *that* important. This is another way of saying that the Enlightenment project is not without value, even if it is deeply flawed and has never been well-realized. Kass' struggle with the binding of Isaac is a lovely example of the humane and thoughtful intellectual exercise that that classic Enlightenment institution, the secular university seminar room, can, at its best, produce.

Recognizing this point, I am led back to my earlier claim that Kass' book is not for people like me. It will now be clear, I hope, that by "people like me" I mean people of faith who insist that sacred texts demand to be treated as such. Kass' commentary reminds me that a less insistent approach may bear fruit too. It is true that, as I explore the book, it is not always easy for me to keep its virtues in mind; I shudder when I read (for instance) these words in his Epilogue:

> The book of Genesis is mainly concerned with this question: Is it possible to find, institute, and preserve a way of life that accords with man's true standing in the world and that serves to perfect his godlike possibilities?

It seems to me that not a single significant word in this sentence accords with what the book of Genesis is about. Genesis, and the culture from which it emerges, doesn't seem to me to give a damn about our "true standing in the world" and our "godlike possibilities"; rather, as far as I can tell, it is about God and what He has done, and is doing, to repair what His rebellious and arrogant creatures have broken: our relations with ourselves, with one another, with the creation, and with God Himself.

But even as I make my protest I realize that, if Kass' language would be unrecognizable to the biblical authors, so too the language I have just employed would ring hollow and strange in the ears of most university students in America today. When reading an ancient text, especially one that makes the kinds of demands on us that Genesis makes—demands not just on our attention but also on our obedient response, on our whole lives—we have to start somewhere, and in the end I'm not sure that it matters much where. Should we begin with the contexts and assumptions of the ancient world and work our way towards the present situation? Should we begin with present forms of understanding and work our way back towards the ancient text's lifeworld? Though we are accustomed to the idea that readers need to be governed by the right hermeneutic, in fact theory and method mean next to nothing in reading. The real question is not where we begin—not what tools we bring to the task of reading (about which we may not have as much choice as we think we do anyway)—but rather what purposes move us and what fortitude we show in pursuing them.

Leon Kass, in this book and in his classes at Chicago, is asking people to *pay attention* to this strange old book, to listen very carefully to hear what it might have to say to them; he is, further, suggesting to them that they need wisdom if they are to live well, and that they might

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find a deposit of it in these stories. Those of us who believe in the sacred power of the Bible shouldn't worry that that power can be shut off by a faulty hermeneutic. If I suspect many of Kass' categories and methods, I do not doubt the force of that invitation simply to read wisely. Kass himself, as he admits forthrightly at several points in his book, is still very much a wayfarer in the pages of Genesis, striving to take hold of the story and perhaps also of the God who fills its pages with His deeds, His words, His mysteries; and this teacher asks students and readers alike to strive alongside him. May he hold fast to the book until it blesses him. FT

Death Song

From orchards, and gardens, and house I move on,
From porcelain and goblets engraved by the potter,
On to the final rites, much like the swan
Whose death song is sung by Meander's water.

It's done. I've unraveled the thread of my fate—
I have lived. My name holds its old reputation;
Far from the snares of the clever and great,
My pen rises skyward, a new constellation.

Happy is he who never existed,
Happier he who returns to nil
As he was before, and happier still
Who sits beside Jesus—an angel enlisted,
Free from this body and predestined bond,
A spirit, no destiny but the beyond.

Pierre de Ronsard (1524-1585)
Translated from the French by Terese Coe

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Books In Review

Revolutionary Perspectives

TO BEGIN THE WORLD ANEW: THE GENIUS AND AMBIGUITIES OF THE AMERICAN FOUNDERS. By BERNARD BAILYN. *Knopf. 185 pp. $26.*

***Reviewed by* Michael Zuckert**

ABOUT TWENTY-FIVE years ago Bernard Bailyn transformed the study of the American Revolution with his *Ideological Origins of the American Revolution.* He not only swept the field of major awards for history (Pulitzer and Bancroft), but set scholarship on the founding era off in directions that are still being pursued by scholars in the field. He directed attention away from the influential approach of Charles Beard, which emphasized material conditions and economic causes of the revolution, and back towards what the colonists were saying were their grievances against Britain. (Edmund Morgan was a pioneer on the path that Bailyn broadened and developed.)

However, he did not merely restore the older intellectual perspectives, which had focused either on the constitutional conflict between the British and the colonists, as in C.H. McIlwain's *The American Revolution,* or on the more philosophic dimensions of their thought, as in Carl Becker's *The Declaration of Independence.* Bailyn noted the constitutional and the philosophic sides of the dispute, but he argued that both of these were subordinate to another strand: Whig opposition thought, which was neither so technical as the constitutional arguments, nor so high-falutin' as the philosophical. The Whig thinkers picked up themes of both the philosophic and constitutional sort, but joined them to a popularly compelling story of the dynamics of political life as a contest between power and liberty, oppression and freedom.

The opposition writers told themselves a story of the tendency of power to corrupt and oppress; Americans then used that story as a template to process their understanding of the events of the 1760s and 1770s. This template accounts for the alacrity and ease with which they suspected the worst from British policy and reacted in ways that produced the evils they feared. The opposition ideology caused both the extreme sensitivity of the Americans to British policy (almost a paranoid reaction, Bailyn suggested) and the degree to which the American populace mobilized in reaction to these policies. The opposition tradition had a clear and easily graspable story, readily transferred from one set of historical events to another, and it had the simplicity, along with the appeal to passion, especially anger, that could move masses.

Bailyn's *To Begin the World Anew: The Genius and Ambiguities of the American Founders* is a collection of five essays, written on different occasions, but loosely held together thematically; in a manner of speaking, it constitutes a sequel to his *Ideological Origins.* The five essays together carry Bailyn's story beyond the revolution and into the era of the early republic. The first and the last serve as bookends and capture his theme. The first essay takes as its point of departure the observations by the art historian Kenneth Clark on the differences between provincial and metropolitan art. The metropolitans set the standard and establish the orthodoxies that dominate the minds and taste of the well-informed. The provincials, on the periphery of things, not so well-trained, usually unable to reach the heights of the metropolitan art, are also less constrained by metropolitan orthodoxies, and become the seat and source of new creative energies and breakthroughs.

Bailyn argues that this pattern explains the remarkable "creative imagination" eighteenth-century Americans brought to politics. They were able to question the truisms that dominated British political thought, and thus set out in astonishingly new directions. They broke with the old shibboleth that sovereignty cannot be divided and thus that there must be some supremely sovereign legislative body in every independent political unit. That precept had served as the unshakeable axiom of parliamentary policy prior to the revolution, but the Americans challenged it and later overcame it with their adoption—nay, invention—of a new kind of federalism (an impossible system under the old theory) and new forms of separation of powers and guarantees for individual rights.

PERHAPS BECAUSE HE was inspired in his thesis by an art historian, Bailyn uses art to extraordinarily good effort in this first essay. He uses the art to demonstrate the difference between metropolitan and provincial society, along with metropolitan and provincial mindsets, through a comparison of portrayals of persons and places in Britain and America in the eighteenth century. It is tempting to say a picture is worth a thousand words, but that would be to slight the contribution of Bailyn's words, astutely calling attention to features of the paired images that make his point.

The last essay, much more prosaic, emphasizes the consequences of American political creativity by exploring the impact the American founding had in the Atlantic community. He takes issue here with a "now conventional" view "among historians . . . that after a brief flurry in the

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first two years of the French Revolution the constitutional ideas and institutions of the American Revolution had little influence on the development of European or Latin American constitutionalism." Bailyn's point is not that the American example was always followed, slavishly or otherwise, but that it was a "reserve of experience—exemplary, of good or ill—a reserve that could be drawn on when needed, intermittently, selectively, with emphases that were shaped differently by the distinctive problems of different societies in different modes and at different stages of transformation in the age of the Atlantic revolution." Whether followed closely or not, Bailyn sees that the American example did indeed "begin the world anew."

Not all of Bailyn's essays are equally successful. The central study, on "Realism and Idealism in American Diplomacy," while full of charming bits, does not work well. It centers on Benjamin Franklin in Paris and ostensibly wishes to say something about the subject matter of its title, but most of it is devoted to changing portrayals of Franklin. The result is a fascinating study, but not one that addresses the ostensible theme of the essay.

THE MOST SIGNIFICANT ESSAY is probably the fourth, on the *Federalist Papers*. Here his subject is the great authority accorded the *Federalist* in our time, at least in some circles. As he inform us, the Supreme Court has been citing the *Federalist* at an ever-increasing rate, and attributing ever-greater authority to it. However, this may appear puzzling because the *Federalist* was a book written not for the ages, but for a very specific occasion (the battle over ratification of the Constitution in New York in 1787-88), and for a society internally different from today's America, which holds a place in the world at a polar extreme from the America of the founding generation. Yet despite these differences, "we still go back to the *Federalist Papers*." About this fact, Bailyn asks, "Why? Should we?"

His answer is yes, and along the way to justifying it he explores perhaps the most interesting theme of this slim volume: Just what was the relation between the constitutional founding and the revolution? Since at least the time of Charles Beard this has been a much debated topic. In the post-*Ideological Origins* period arguably the most authoritative answer was given by his former student, Gordon Wood, who had taken over, but somewhat redescribed, Bailyn's version of the revolutionary ideology and gone on to ask what had happened to it at the time of the drafting of the Constitution. To simplify somewhat, Wood claimed that the Constitution represented a major shift in the thinking of the Americans, the replacement of one paradigm (republicanism and virtue) by another (liberalism and self-interest).

Without mentioning Wood by name or the many others who have more or less followed him, Bailyn takes issue with this version of eighteenth-century history. Bailyn's account is, in my opinion, essentially the correct one. In the debate over the Constitution, the Constitution's enemies, the Anti-Federalists, were, as they understood themselves to be, the true heirs of the thought of the revolutionaries. They retained the revolutionaries' fear of centralized power and effective government. The promoters of the Constitution, the authors of the *Federalist*, were indeed the innovators. But their innovations were not of the sort Wood and others have proclaimed.

The debate over the Constitution was one about who or what could save the revolution—that is, secure and preserve the gains for liberty and the "humane uses of power" in the name of which the revolution had been fought. Bailyn demonstrates that the framers of the Constitution came to realize that the revolution could be saved only if effective, i.e., powerful and somewhat centralized, authority were instituted—and they were so important because they figured out ways to combine effective governance with the revolutionary concern for liberty. The Constitution represented a shift, but not a break, from the political science of the revolutionaries. In

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an economical twenty pages or so Bailyn gives a good sense of wherein this shift consisted.

For those of us who have regretted that books for grown-ups too seldom have pictures, this is an ideal book. It has sixty-five delicious prints, mostly portraits of eighteenth-century persons, some photographs of stately homes of America and England from the same period. It is also a book for readers who can savor a beautifully written essay by an author who wears his immense learning lightly, and conveys it with grace. *To Begin the World Anew* confirms what many of us already knew—that Bailyn is a master of the essay form and of the period of which he writes. If he has any shortcoming it is that he leaves us wanting more.

Modernism, Science, and Spirituality

EXPLORING THE INVISIBLE: ART, SCIENCE, AND THE SPIRITUAL. By LYNN GAMWELL. *Princeton University Press. 344 pp. $49.95.*

***Reviewed by* Gregory Wolfe**

IN 1959, the British writer and science popularizer C. P. Snow published his Rede Lecture at Cambridge University as *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution*, touching off a heated debate about the relationship between the humanities and science in the modern era. Snow made a show of deploring the danger of growing specialization of knowledge among scientists, but he soon revealed himself as an enthusiastic proponent of what some critics have called "scientism." In short, his argument quickly devolved into an attack on literary advocates of the "traditional culture," thinkers he decried as "natural Luddites." Scientists, he averred, were different: "They have the future in their bones." Only by embracing the scientific worldview, Snow opined, will we be able to solve such terrible social problems as overpopulation, nuclear weaponry, and the gap between rich and poor nations.

Though Snow's book is rarely read these days, "the two cultures" remains in currency, a mental reminder of what really is a perennial intellectual tension, not a problem confined to the modern era. The rivalry between reason and imagination—and the disciplines that spring from them—is at least as ancient as Plato and, it seems fair to say, will be with us always. I raise Snow's book in the context of this review because Lynn Gamwell's *Exploring the Invisible: Art, Science, and the Spiritual* attempts to show how the visuals arts have, in fact, drawn deeply from the achievements of science in the modern era—and because, in the end, she too clings to something like Snow's scientistic creed.

This handsome art book, though it is oversized and full of color plates, is not meant for the coffee table. Rather, it is a detailed survey of the way modern science and secularized notions of spirituality have influenced Western art over the past two centuries, and in particular how these forces helped bring about the rise of Modernist abstraction. Given the scope of her project, it would be pleasant to report that Gamwell has the narrative brio and accessibility of an art critic like Robert Hughes, but her literary skills do not lie in that direction. Names, dates, scientific schools of thought, and artistic styles tend to pile up in heaps, especially in the early chapters of the book. But the breadth of Gamwell's scholarship will likely earn the determined reader's respect, and in later sections the narrative picks up steam.

GREGORY WOLFE *is the editor of* Image: A Journal of the Arts and Religion *and the author, most recently, of* Intruding Upon the Timeless: Meditations on Art, Faith, and Mystery *(Square Halo).*

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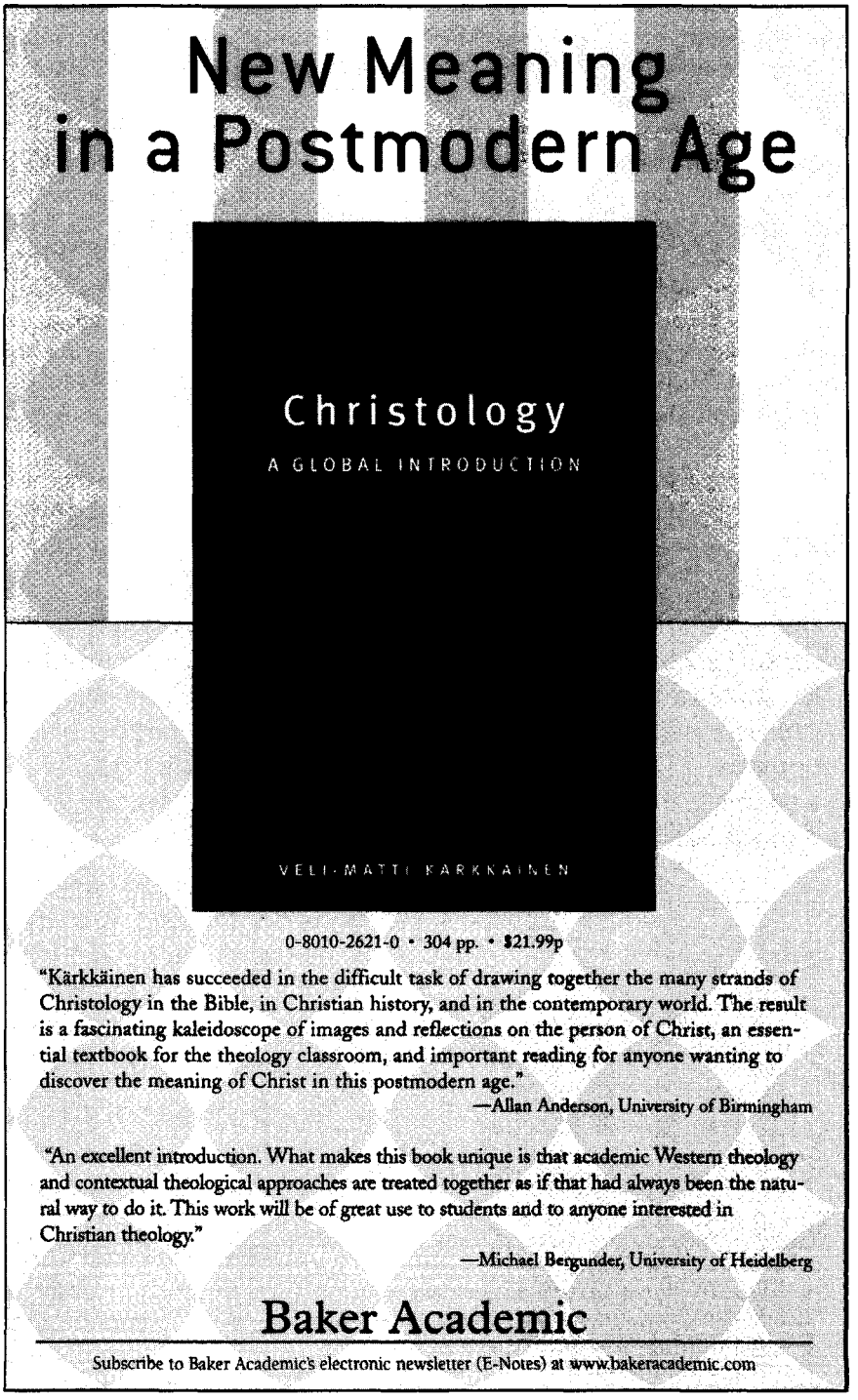
Gamwell's thesis is that revolutions in science—specifically in the physiology of perception, relativistic physics, and Freudian psychology—combined with the pantheistic strains of German Idealism, gave visual artists in the West a radically new paradigm for art. Thanks to the works of such scientists as Hermann von Helmholz and James Clerk Maxwell, nineteenth-century artists became far more self-conscious about the way the human eye responds to the world. As a result, painters like Seurat—and later, the Cubists—began to create works that depended on the way the human mind constructs perceptions of color, line, and form. Einstein's theories of relativity, as Gamwell rightly notes, became public knowledge only after the first wave of abstraction (contrary to both popular and art historical misconceptions), but they did have a major impact on later artists, including Paul Klee and Joan Miro. Freud's emphasis on the unconscious fed directly into the Surrealist movement. All three of these shifts in modern science induced artists to break with Renaissance ideas of "objective" perspective and adopt an opaque, flattened, subjective picture plane.

OF COURSE, MUCH of this territory has been well covered by other art historians. If there is anything original about *Exploring the Invisible* it is perhaps the emphasis on the spiritual aspirations of modern art. It is difficult not to put scare quotes around the word spiritual, which is notoriously vague, if not meaningless, in contemporary usage. But in one sense Gamwell is right to use it, because it is precisely the term that so many modern thinkers have used to describe a form of enlightenment deliberately severed from the transcendent and metaphysical roots of Western thought. From mesmerism and animal magnetism to theosophy and beyond, Gamwell chronicles with great seriousness attempts by modern artists to explore immanentist spiritualities.

The author has chosen to move beyond the impartiality of the historian striving for objectivity; she makes no bones about being partisan on these matters. To her way of thinking, what many may see as discarded fads are part of a larger story of human progress, joining up with the same forward movement of scientific understanding led by Darwin, Freud, and Einstein. Throughout the book, her diction shades into what might be called neo-Transcendentalism; her most reverent utterances tend to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—Michael Bergunder, University of Heidelberg
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include words like cosmic, universal, unity, and "the Absolute." For Gamwell, pantheism is a living faith.

Along with C. P. Snow, she has no time for heretics, for those who resist the pull of scientific and spiritual progress. Though she seldom delivers outright criticism of the major artists and movements that don't fit into her argument—pre- and post-Cubist Picasso, Matisse, Fauvism, Expressionism, and nearly every form of representational art, to name just a few—she does take a number of swipes at minor targets. The Symbolists, for example, are taken to task for their decadence and melancholia. "Whistler and his Aesthetic colleagues," she adds a few pages later, "turned their backs on the imperceptible and hence on abstract art. Clinging to an old-fashioned view of nature, Whistler continued to describe its outward appearance." Worst of all, these artists were guilty of "nostalgia."

When it comes to aesthetics, Gamwell is a spirited, if belated, defender of the orthodox High Modernist line. So when she finally arrives, in the last chapter of the book, at our own postmodern moment, she finds herself in something of a pickle. Given postmodernism's scorn for the nineteenth- and twentieth-century secular "master narratives" (including science itself), she has to find a way to be both critical about the present and optimistic about the march of progress. Gamwell responds by dividing postmodern art into schools of bad "cynicism" and good "mysticism." In praising the mystical strain in postmodernism, with its emphasis on the elusiveness of truth and presence, she likens it to the apophatic theology of the Pseudo-Dionysius. Just as Dionysius followed the "negative way," approaching God by sifting through what He is not, so some postmodern artists explore mystery by way of indirection. The book ends with a photograph from the Hubble space telescope of the Cone Nebula, presumably as a reminder that there is still mystery out there to be explored.

As tendentious and occasionally muddled as Gamwell's study may be, it would be a serious mistake to dismiss it out of hand. The questions it raises for those of us who hold to biblical faith are profound and directly relevant to the present. Yet the track record of believers vis-à-vis modern art has been less than stellar. The alienation between institutional religion and the art world has been mutually reinforcing for over a century. Many religious critics of modernity

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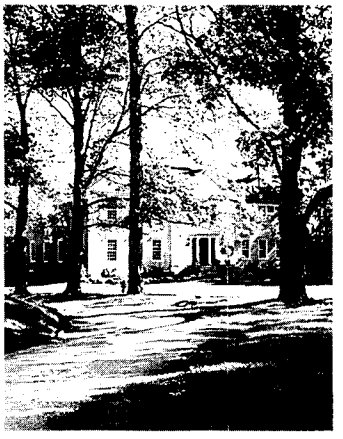

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have dismissed the rise of abstraction as evidence of an antihumanist rebellion against classic Western ideas about order, proportion, and form. It's a position that has some coherence, but it tends toward a reification of art into a trans-historical and, in my opinion, fairly lame classicism. The truth is more complex—and more interesting—than that, as a few incisive thinkers have demonstrated. Among literary critics, Hugh Kenner and Denis Donoghue have explored the intersections between Modernism, science, and religion. Theologians such as Paul Tillich and Hans Urs von Balthasar have also made contributions to this area, as did the great neo-Thomist Jacques Maritain.

BUT TO FOCUS ON one example, take the argument made by another neo-Thomist, Étienne Gilson, in his 1955 Mellon Lectures, published as *Painting and Reality*. There he contended that nonrepresentational art, beginning with Manet and Cezanne, had restored art to its true dignity. Gilson held that Western art after the Middle Ages had fallen into the trap of empiricism, thinking that art should only be an imitation of what we can see with our eyes. But modern art, Gilson said, had recovered the idea that art is not so much about imitating the world as it is about creating new artifacts through which to interpret the world. In his typically bold way, Gilson wrote that through the arts human beings were continuing God's work of creation.

Then there is the fact that some of the greatest Modernists, including the painter Georges Rouault, the poet T. S. Eliot, and the composer Igor Stravinsky, found in the language of abstraction, fragmentation, and primitivism ways to reconnect ancient religious truths with the conditions of the modern era. It is difficult to imagine Rouault's stunning images of the suffering Christ without his early Fauvist paintings, Eliot's *Four Quartets* without *The Waste Land*, Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms* without *Le Sacre du Printemps*.

That the aesthetic language of Modernism in turn became exhausted is not a count against it. Such is the nature of aesthetic change. Postmodernism has its own opportunities and dead ends. Among those who follow what Gamwell calls the mystical path, there are many whose sense of mystery opens directly onto the transcendent. She singles out Anselm Kiefer as a mystic. Yet this German painter's work, saturated as it is with biblical allusions, can hardly be called pantheistic. His huge canvases, laden with heavy materials and heavy themes, including the continuing reverberations of the Holocaust, is too obsessed with the reality of evil to accept blithe talk about "cosmic unity."

AS THE PUBLISHER of a journal of literature and the arts, I have had the chance to observe another group of postmodern visual artists whom I would add to Gamwell's cynics and mystics: those who have returned to narrative and the human figure, albeit in ways that retain Gilson's understanding of art as the creation of new *beings* rather than as mere imitations. For many visual artists trained in the art schools of the 1960s and 1970s, schools that were dominated by Abstract Expressionists, there came a point when they experienced a simultaneous crisis of belief and aesthetic form. Many of these artists underwent true conversion experiences, finding not only that they had to go beyond pantheism to faith in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but also discovering that figure and narrative enabled them to rediscover beauty and meaning. It is worth noting, in the light of Gamwell's concerns, that in recent years there has been a strong surge of interest in narrative not only among those in the humanities, but also in the social and physical sciences.

Gamwell's take on the story of modern art may be biased in the manner of C. P. Snow, and she would likely have little sympathy for these recent converts to traditional faith and representationalism, but the history she reconstructs is one that religious thinkers interested in the state of our two cultures urgently need to address.

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Second-Hand Civ.

ECCENTRIC CULTURE: A THEORY OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION. By RÉMI BRAGUE. Translated by SAMUEL LESTER. *St. Augustine's. 205 pp. $28.*

***Reviewed by* Edward T. Oakes**

IN THE OPENING MONTHS of World War II, Winston Churchill delegated, among others, the future Tory Prime Minister Harold Macmillan to try to cajole the United States into joining the war. Macmillan must have felt diffident about his task, for he confided to a friend that an American-assisted Allied victory would also inevitably mean the dissolution of the British Empire and the dawn of American hegemony. But he consoled himself in these glum thoughts with Horace's famous line, "Conquered Greece conquered her rude conqueror by insinuating her arts into rustic Latium." Perhaps British influence would live on inside a future American dominance, Macmillan thought, through English culture, if not Anglo-Saxon arms.

In *Eccentric Culture: A Theory of Western Civilization*, his richly insightful essay on Western Europe's essentially Roman identity, Rémi Brague cites this line from Horace but not Macmillan's application of it to the United States. In fact, the American experiment hardly comes into the argument at all; but the book (which was published in France in 1992) could not be more apt in this time of unexpected tensions between Europe (or at least "old" Europe) and America. For whatever else shapes European self-identity, ambivalence toward the Roman legacy must certainly rank high. For Brague, the Roman Empire conjures up in most people's minds little more than a clumsy, brutal, bastardized transposition of Greek splendor, the slave-based, blood-drenched prologue to what would later become the glories of medieval and modern civilizations. From Sophocles and Socrates to Nero and the gladiators makes for quite a declension. "The Roman, from this point of view, can only appear to have succeeded at this paradox, of being both decadent and primitive at the same time."

For reasons that can easily be explained, that ambivalence has now been projected onto American culture and geopolitics, and comparisons of U.S. foreign policy with ancient Rome's hegemony are now commonplace. As are visions of Roman (and American) thuggery: "The Romans of history pass for thick-haired, thick-headed rustics, for a people of soldiers, not to say downright bullies. Even if one concedes that they had a certain political genius, they are reproached for the centralizing imperialism that was its fruit."

For Brague, this attitude cloaks a secret self-hatred. For him "Romanity" (the author's own coinage) is the central fact of the European West. In saying this, he is not giving priority to the Roman element over the Hebrew or Hellenic, still less is he saying that Rome is merely the awkward hybrid of two irreconcilable cultures. Rather, as he puts it, "I do not want to privilege here the Roman element, nor do I want to suggest that it be constituted as the synthesis of the two others. I claim, more radically, that *we are not and cannot be 'Greeks' and 'Jews' unless we are first of all Romans.*"

Traditionally, cultural historians trace the roots of Western Europe to two cities, Athens and Jerusalem. But much more rarely noticed is the fact that neither Athens nor Jerusalem lies within what for most centuries were considered the cultural and historical boundaries of Europe. Athens, of course, as the capital of Greece, lies within the geographical boundaries of Europe, but ever since the division

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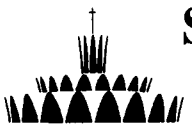

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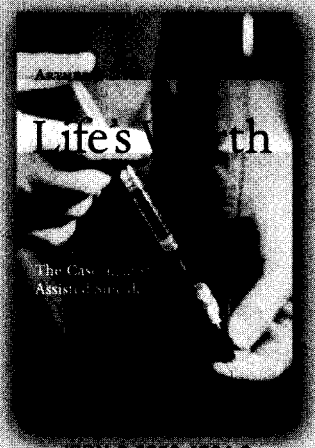
of the Empire by Constantine, the culture of the East grew apart from the West, and then, under the "Turkocracy" of the Ottomans, Greece was cut off from the Western orbit altogether. In other words, the West identifies with Athens and Jerusalem—the Hellenic and Hebrew strains of its culture—only through the mediating genius of Rome. The West knew Athens and Jerusalem only as *ideas*, not as cities belonging to its polity. Only Rome, the overweening, overwhelming political capital of the Empire, taught Europe to look elsewhere for its two cultural capitals.

THIS MEANS THAT the essence of European civilization is what Brague calls, in another of his coinages, "secondarity." By this neologism the author is referring not just to Rome's lateness in relation to the antiquity of Athens and Jerusalem but to the way Rome absorbed and then transformed Hebrew and Hellenic elements precisely by serving as the "mere" conduit for their transmission:

> All that the most severe judges are willing to concede to Romanity is that Rome spread the riches of Hellenism and transmitted them down to us. But this is precisely the important fact—everything changes if one stops examining the content of the Roman experience only, and instead turns to the transmission itself. This one little thing that is conceded to be properly Roman is perhaps the whole of Rome. . . . The Romans have done little more than transmit, but that is far from nothing. They have brought nothing new in relation to those two creator peoples, the Greeks and the Hebrews. But they were the bearers of that innovation. They brought innovation itself. What was ancient for them, they brought as something new.

Again, parallels between "old" Europe and "new" America readily suggest themselves. Not for nothing did the Founding Fathers choose as the motto of the new-born United States *novus ordo seclorum*, inscribed on every dollar bill. But there is a difference: for the Greeks it was a matter of pride not to have owed anything to anyone (despite their clear debts to Babylon and Egypt), while the Romans readily admitted their debt to a prior and more magnificent Greece, as the line from Horace—who quite frankly admits Rome's uncouth, even "barbarous" ways—

ETHICISTS



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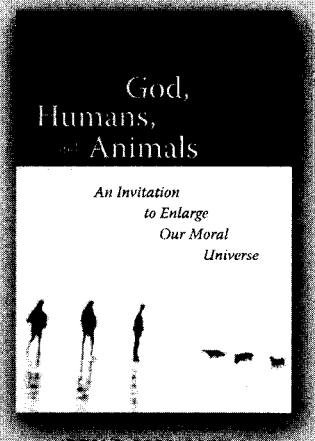

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attests. But Europe cannot be that insouciant about its past debts in the manner of the Greeks, so it responds to the upstart Americans, as Macmillan did, by making the Americans play the part of Rome while it wraps itself in the mantle of Sophocles and Socrates.

One of the standard prejudices of philosophers plying their trade in the West is the notion that Latin is more impoverished than Greek for expressing the nuances of metaphysical speculation (Heidegger felt the same about the virtues of German over French or English). Whether true or not, Latin certainly served as a linguistic bonding agent in the European West in a way not paralleled by any other language in the world. As Brague argues, Latin "suffers" from a triple secondarity: 1) it was no one's mother tongue after the collapse of Rome; 2) it was never a deliberately coined Christian language, but the language of the Roman Empire, a political rather than a religious entity and one that antedated Christianity by centuries and was mostly hostile to it; 3) it was the language of the officially recognized Bible in the West (the Vulgate), but the Scriptures themselves were originally written in Hebrew and Greek. The Vulgate, therefore, perfectly expresses the essentially Roman (that is, secondary) feature of Christianity, whose originating "Greeks" are the Jews: "Christianity is to the Old Covenant what the Romans were to the Greeks."

For that reason, Europe's two great threatening "Others" were the Byzantines and the Arabs. Unlike Byzantium, Europe did not perdure through so many centuries accompanied by a language that had been with that civilization from the beginning—that is, since before Homer. For the Byzantines, Greek was the sum and substance of their entire literature, giving them a feeling of cultural superiority. But like the ancient Egypt of the Pharaohs, this feeling of superiority left Byzantium feeling lethargic, effete, and in-grown.

Nor, in contrast to the Arabs, could Rome compensate for its initial dependence on exterior sources in the same confident, even boisterous way Islamic civilization did. Islam's theology of revelation requires it to consider Arabic to be God's own language. Thus when pagan works were translated into Arabic, the Arab world naturally felt that it was thereby ennobling and enlarging the knowledge it inherited: pagan knowledge had been canonized, so to speak, *by God*, for these translated works had now finally

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attained "the language chosen by God for His definitive and unadulterated message." When Europe faced these two civilizations, an inferiority complex was bound to set in.

EUROPE HAS THUS been prone to two temptations. First, it tends to despise the Roman element in its identity by identifying one country within its orbit as quintessentially Roman and despising it accordingly (as France now does to the United States, but which the German Romantics had done in the nineteenth century to Napoleonic France). Second, even as early as the Enlightenment (when European self-confidence was at its highest) but especially with the Romantics, Europe has idealized other cultures innocent of Roman innovation and mediation. These other cultures then absorb that idealization and hate their contemporary reality for not living up to this putative ideal, a gap in perception that they then naturally blame on the West, as Muslim terrorists do in the extreme and Russian Orthodox clerics do less obviously. The end result in either case, however, is lethal:

> For example, Occidental scholars who sing the praises of Islamic civilization at its apogee, of its scientific advances, of what one calls its "tolerance," or alternatively, [scholars who] praise the intellectual and artistic refinement of Medieval Byzantium, are no doubt animated by the very laudable feeling of an injustice to be set aright. It may be, however, that the result is contrary to the end desired, and that they encourage, on the part of those who consider themselves the heirs of these civilizations, nostalgic dreams that at bottom are . . . debilitating.

And debilitating not just for these "other" (by now thoroughly West-infected) civilizations but for the European West too, including the United States. Multiculturalism is now all the rage; but as it is almost entirely lacking in any coherent theory, the term is hardly more than a rallying cry, and an incoherent one at that. For just as Europe's guilt in relation to other cultures lends an unpleasant aggressiveness toward the West in those same non-European lands (even India is now being swept up in Hindu chauvinism), so too that same guilt makes it impossible for Europe to feel confident about what it can teach those other cultures. Worst of all, the very values that constitute its essence are the values it feels too ashamed to export:

> What would be serious would be if Europe considered the universal it carries (the "Greek" of which we are "Romans") as a local particularity valid only for Europe, one which has no extension to other cultures. Now, one sometimes hears it said, for example, that liberty, the rule of law, the right to bodily integrity, would not be good for certain peoples whose tradition, supposed to merit an infinite respect, is for despotism, for official lying, or mutilation—as if liberty and truth were local idiosyncrasies, to be considered on the same level as the wearing of a kilt or the eating of snails.

No civilization in the world is as layered as the European, and therefore none so prone to self-doubt and guilt as Europe has proven to be. Given its many attempts at self-annihilation in the last century through its homegrown ideologies of fascism and communism, European guilt has a point. But because that guilt is also rooted in a crisis of confidence about its true worth, Europe has lost its sense of mission and cannot witness even to its best values. No wonder anti-Americanism is so rife, for the United States is the only remaining European nation (in the cultural if not geographical sense) that still thinks well enough of its values to believe that the rest of the world would benefit from adopting them.

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Building from the Wreckage

IN THE RUINS OF THE CHURCH: SUSTAINING FAITH IN AN AGE OF DIMINISHED CHRISTIANITY. By R. R. RENO. *Brazos. 208 pages. $15.99 paper.*

***Reviewed by* Cynthia L. Rigby**

R. R. RENO shares a concern held by many North American Christian believers: the Church is in ruins, and we are called upon to respond. The common response of both liberals and conservatives, according to Reno, is to separate from the failing and turn toward the new. But Reno's response to the ruins differs, he says, from that of contemporary Christians who are misled by their modern perspective. While the trend is to "distance ourselves from a dying past in order to receive the redemptive future," Reno believes that we, like the Old Testament prophet Nehemiah, must love and live within the ruined walls of the Church.

CYNTHIA L. RIGBY *is the W. C. Brown Associate Professor of Theology at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary.*

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In the Ruins of the Church begins with three essays that develop Reno's observation that we have lost what he refers to as "Augustinian ambition," the genuine desire to be transformed. As those profoundly influenced by modernity, we object to being dependent on anything going on outside of our own heads, such as the dogma of the Christian tradition. "We do not want transformation," Reno writes. "In short, we do not want what Christianity teaches." Like the "enigmatic Roman" Petronius, who lived at the time of Nero, we pride ourselves on being satirical and superficial—"never moralistic . . . never interjecting the voice of some loftier vision."

The Radical Orthodoxy Project, Reno argues, has admirably defied the distance that defines modern theology, arguing that "our deepest assumptions about reality . . . must have a participatory foundation." However, the achievement of Radical Orthodoxy is "uneven" because it is "intellectual and theoretical" rather than "spiritual and ascetical." While "the world *is* participatory," Reno insists, "its participatory framework is Christ-formed." While Radical Orthodoxy "transfers loyalty" to an "ideal," Reno advocates being more concrete and incarnational. "Christ is in the concrete faith and practice of the Church," writes Reno, "and only he can give power and potency to a postmodern theology that is genuinely orthodox." For our part, we need to develop "the disciplines of receiving what has been given."

Later in the book, Reno develops his thesis in more explicit conversation with the Episcopal Church to which he belongs. Believing that the persistent drive for "so-called relevance" is robbing the church of its "corporate memory," Reno recommends that we "return to the sources":

> To recover a coherent, public theological vision, we must train ourselves to think with premodern theologians whose lives and minds were disciplined by a no-doubt imperfect but nonetheless functional common life. . . . Our scriptural exegesis must be primitive . . . [and] reiterative rather than innovative or exploratory. Our engagement with the creeds must be submissive. We must suffer the contradictions of the historic episcopate. We must persevere in baptism and Eucharist.

Reno urges us not to be worried that such approaches will be viewed as "sectarian or anachronistic," assuring us that "in our love for the fallen walls of Zion we will find our hope."

For Reno, properly dwelling in the ruins involves embracing "the ways in which inherited forms of common prayer and communal practice constrain and limit." Similarly, in discussing "Sex in the Episcopal Church," Reno argues for "gladly [accepting] the disciplines of Christian moral expectation." He suggests that our concerns about including homosexuals, like our concerns about making liturgical language more inclusive, are both politically driven and self-serving: "If homosexuality is OK," he argues, "then our transgressions are OK."

Reno concludes his book with a series of chapters that offer further concrete suggestions for what it looks like to live in the ruins, focusing in particular on the reading of Scripture and the Daily Office. Specifically, he enters into conversation with Origen, the Church Father who holds that "the first-order language and practice

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of the Church [is] the sole and sufficient basis for our participation in the life-giving power of God." Interestingly, Reno notes, Origen teaches us that "these ruins are themselves elements of a divine pedagogy" and that "the *concreta Christiana* . . . is full of all sorts of difficulties, puzzles, and obscurities" that "drive us back" to "dependent submission to 'that rule and discipline delivered by Jesus Christ to the apostles and handed down by them in succession to their posterity.'" Submitting to this discipline, we find "spiritual meaning" by engaging in study of Scripture. Similarly, we embrace the Daily Office as "an engine of intimacy" that is not optional, but central to Christian life. The Daily Office "shapes us" as the Holy Spirit works through the cycles of repetition and our "ever-increasing familiarity" with its central elements. As we pray the Daily Office, we recognize that we participate in a "way given . . . not chosen."

Though we are called to dwell in the ruins of the Church, "the stones, however fallen, are living . . . potent with the power of God." Reno repeats that our approach to Scripture must be "primitive," suggesting that we draw "ever closer to the words," even as Nehemiah was drawn to the stones. He demonstrates this by offering a beautiful reading of 1 John in which he explores "patterns of beginnings that are endings and endings that are beginnings." Reno's point is that the "fertile power" of John's language "directs us toward what was from the beginning" and invites us to "journey into the depths of the signs." The words do not point beyond themselves, but are themselves "the indispensable concrete form of our fellowship with each other, with God, and in God." They are the ruins that bring life.

The strength of Reno's work is that it beckons Christian believers back into the ruins where we belong. Reno's case for engaging with premodern texts and figures is largely persuasive, especially when he shows how such engagement enables us to live hopefully in our faith. Reno's contention that we receive benefits from engaging in biblical study and praying the Daily Office, his passion for rehearsing the Augustinian story and conversing with Origen, and his lively exegesis of 1 John all reveal his admirable desire that distance be overcome, that we all (re)learn to participate in the things of God.

I DO HAVE some misgivings, however. While Reno is surely right that contemporary Christians tend to distance themselves from the classical Christian tradition, he fails to take note of those who share his concerns and are themselves dwelling in the ruins, conversing in their own ways with premodern figures and texts. Is it really true, for example, that *all* feminist and liberationist theologians have relegated the "ruined church" to the "dead past"? On the contrary, feminists and liberationists often tenaciously refuse to abandon the ruins, despite the fact that some of its stones have been consistently hurled against them. Even more troubling is that Reno seems indifferent to the myriad rank and file members of the Church who—in the midst of the drive for relevance and change—faithfully seek to participate in the tradition that is their inheritance, engaging quietly in biblical study and in the Daily Office, eager to know more deeply what has been seen, heard, and taught throughout the ages.

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While Reno is right that we are called to love the stones, he seems to forget that Nehemiah's desire was not only to dwell in the ruins, but also to rebuild. Hence Reno's insistence that premodern texts are *all* we need is unpersuasive. As a theologian of the Reformed tradition, I wonder if Reno's outright rejection of all imagination and change has something to do with a difference in the Anglican understanding of the character of revelation and ecclesiology. The Reformed conviction that the Church is ever in the process of being reformed does not leave us unmoored from all tradition, but it does mean that God's transforming work can be made manifest in change, even in changes in the liturgy. While Reno makes a strong case for dwelling in and appreciating the power of the biblical text, it is unclear to me why he insists that the text "never points beyond itself." Must we choose between the intrinsic value of the text and its implications for the shape of life beyond? Between dwelling in the ruins and drawing up blueprints for reconstruction? Between truly loving the tradition and seeking to discern what is newly becoming part of that tradition?

Following Nehemiah, I share Reno's hope for a healing of our souls—for inner transformation and salvation. While I firmly believe that Nehemiah's path requires us to move beyond the ruins to rebuilding, and that this rebuilding involves both love of the stones and imaginative change, Reno is surely correct to emphasize that attempts to rebuild without a prior focus on dwelling will result in the most profound spiritual loss. If we are to rebuild, we must first love the ruins.

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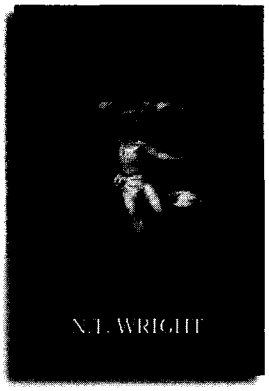

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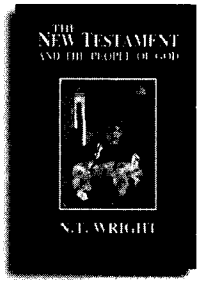

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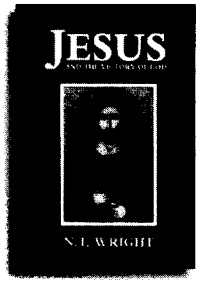

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ESSENTIAL ESSAYS ON JUDAISM. By ELIEZER BERKOVITS. Edited by DAVID HAZONY. *Shalem. 393 pp. $22.95 paper.*

***Reviewed by* David Novak**

DURING THE SECOND HALF of the twentieth century, three significant traditionalist Jewish thinkers were at work in America, if by "traditionalist" one means thinkers who affirm the divine revelation of the Torah, and who thereby accept the authority of Jewish

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law based on that revelation. The three were Abraham Joshua Heschel (1907-1972), Joseph Baer Soloveitchik (1903-1993), and Eliezer Berkovits (1908-1992). They had much in common. All were spiritually and intellectually nurtured by the still-vibrant talmudic culture of their youth in Eastern Europe. All of them studied philosophy in Germany in the late 1920s and early 1930s, each receiving his Ph.D. from the University of Berlin just before the Nazi regime made that impossible for Jews. Each of them lost many family members in the Holocaust. All of them did their major work in America. And, most important of all, all three addressed the same general question: How could modern, secularized Jews be brought back intelligently to classic Jewish faith?

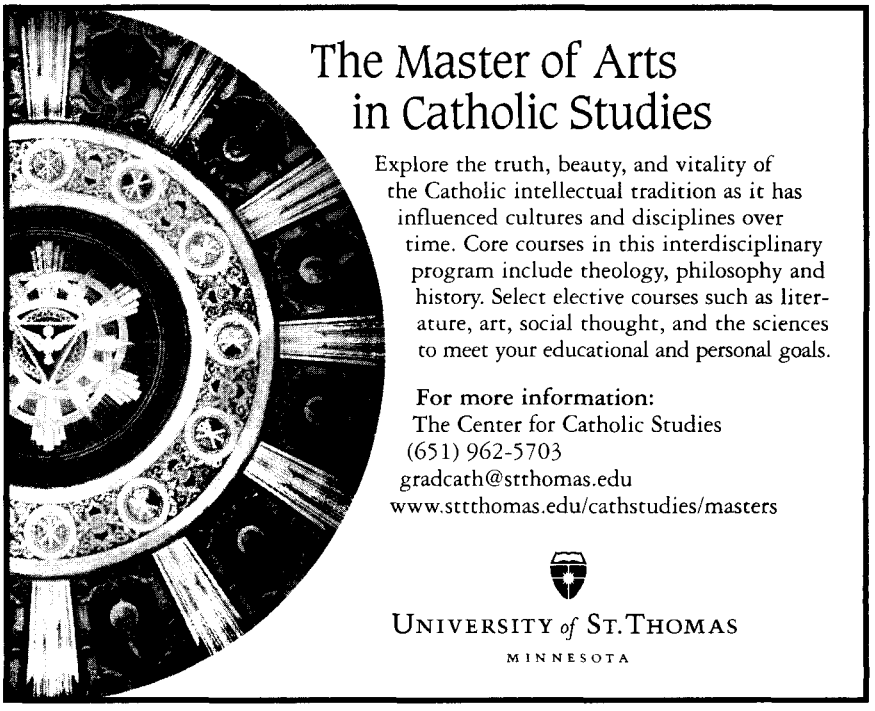
Heschel and Soloveitchik were luckier in their careers than was Berkovits, partially because of their more important institutional affiliations: Heschel at the Jewish Theological Seminary (then still a traditionalist institution), Soloveitchik at Yeshiva University. Berkovits, by contrast, spent many years as a rabbi in out-of-the-way pulpits, and the latter part of his career teaching at the Hebrew Theological College in Chicago, a rather minor Orthodox rabbinical seminary. The last seventeen years of his life were spent in virtual retirement in Israel, where he continued to write. But, although a prolific writer in English and Hebrew, his writings received scant attention during his lifetime.

David Hazony of the Shalem Center in Jerusalem, a neoconservative think tank with a strong interest in theology, is leading an effort to win for Berkovits' thought the attention it never received when he was alive. *Essential Essays on Judaism* is an anthology of some of Berkovits' major writings between 1943 and 1983. The volume's short introduction by Hazony describes Berkovits' thought in a way that is helpful to the contemporary reader. In fact, the introduction suggests a full-length monograph on Berkovits may be in preparation. That would be a most welcome addition to the growing literature on modern Jewish thinkers and their thought.

The leitmotif of Berkovits' writing might be described as "the ethical reform of traditional Jewish law and practice." In situating this project, it is useful to contrast Berkovits' approach with those of Heschel and Soloveitchik, which Hazony begins to do in his introduction, though without mentioning names. Since most theologians are, in fact, engaging in philosophical reflection on their religious traditions, it is useful to recognize how the major philosophical influences on these three theologians helped determine their theological positions. For Heschel, it was Kierkegaard. For Soloveitchik, it was Kant. For Berkovits, it was Hume. This identification helps explain Heschel's concern with the inner intention that could inspire observance of the commandments. It also helps explain Soloveitchik's interest in early-twentieth-century neo-Kantian "moral axiology," with its emphasis on the formal, a priori status of the principles of law, from which practical deductions could continually be made.

BERKOVITS' MAJOR CONCERN, by contrast, was far more empirical. It had to do with the effects of observance of the law on society. Hazony describes this as a concern with "consequences of actions." Whether Berkovits would qualify as a "consequentialist" is an interesting question that Hazony might want to explore in his attempt to revive Berkovits' voice in current discussions of normative issues. Indeed, like some current consequentialists, Berkovits was more concerned with what actually happens as a result of moral action than with what one's inner intention is, or how well one's action conforms to abstract, formal principles.

Berkovits' overall idea of Jewish law led him to criticize much of modern Orthodox interpretation and application of that law. He was convinced that most of the Orthodox were unaware of or afraid to face the true purposes of the law. In this sense, Berkovits' approach was more teleological than that of either Heschel or Soloveitchik. And his courageous candor in openly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criticizing the myopia of many of his fellow Orthodox rabbis made Berkovits an outsider in the Orthodox world. There the more theologically inclined looked to Soloveitchik's formalism for any theory of the law. But unlike Berkovits' more empirical, pragmatic approach, Soloveitchik's formalism provided a ready rationale for the status quo rather than a critique of it. In fact, in a 1974 essay, at a time when Soloveitchik was at the height of his influence, Berkovits, a professor in an Orthodox seminary, was willing to say that Orthodoxy had put "halacha [traditional Jewish law] in a straitjacket." This view stems from Berkovits' theological assumption that the purpose of the law is to bring about a heightened ethical climate in Jewish religious life.

Berkovits was especially critical of the vulnerable position of women in the current state of Jewish law. Specifically, this meant the lack of rights a married Jewish woman has in relation to her husband, a disparity that often places her at the mercy of her husband's whims in issues of marriage and divorce. Nevertheless, Berkovits' approach was very different from the one favored by liberal Jews today, with their wholesale espousal of egalitarianism. For them, there is no notable difference between men and women (which might explain why, in general, they are so confused over sexuality in Judaism). Berkovits, on the other hand, affirmed the equity of women and men within the institution of Jewish marriage. He never advocated any abrogation of existing Jewish law.

In his later writings, Berkovits did call for certain safeguards of women's rights already present in principle in the law. The result would be, he believed, the ethical enhancement of Jewish marriage. What was needed, according to Berkovits, was ethical courage on the part of Jewish legal authorities to put what already exists in principle into practice. Viewed in retrospect, Berkovits' work on this issue turned out to be a major inspiration for many traditional Jewish women who sought to carve out for themselves a new role within the boundaries of the Jewish religious life governed by the law.

During his lifetime, some of Berkovits' Orthodox critics accused him of being, in theory if not in affiliation, a "Conservative" Jew. Didn't Conservative Judaism also talk about the development of the law and how it both changed and had to change in order to remain a vital cultural force? Here Hazony (himself an Orthodox Jew) comes to Berkovits' posthumous defense by emphasizing that "Berkovits understands change in halacha . . . to further moral ends that are themselves intrinsic to Judaism and unchanging." In other words, unlike the "Conservatives" (who today, in principle if not yet in practice, are indistinguishable from Reform Jews), Berkovits affirmed the revealed foundations of the law. Thus in his 1959 essay "Law and Morality in Jewish Tradition," Berkovits argued that not only Jewish law but normative morality in general requires a grounding in the will of God.

For an empiricist like Berkovits, God's will cannot be derived from data in the world. That would require metaphysical inferences foreign to his philosophical orientation. God's will can only be known from direct revelation to the world. Its expression must have been experienced in history. Unlike medieval Jewish theologians, Berkovits himself did not, to my knowledge, reflect on Christianity and Islam, which also claim to be based on revelation. He was quite anti-Christian, but that opposition was based on a moral judgment of the history of Christian behavior towards Jews rather than on a theological judgment of the claims of Christian revelation. In my view, Berkovits was quite simplistic in that moral-historical judgment.

Jewish tradition is the medium whereby the revealed datum is transmitted and developed throughout history. It is the flexibility of that process of transmission and application that gives Jewish tradition its historical relevance, while also avoiding the relativistic historicism that characterizes liberal Judaism today. For Berkovits, the law's foundation in revelation saves the reforms he advocated from becoming

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Reform Judaism, which, he consistently maintained, is antinomian.

MUCH OF BERKOVITS' THOUGHT is incomplete, probably due to the fact that he was primarily an essayist rather than the author of treatises. One wishes he had been able to write a definitive work like Heschel's *God in Search of Man* or Soloveitchik's *Halakhic Man.* Nevertheless, what Berkovits did leave behind are many powerful insights and suggestions for further exploration. Who are his heirs? They are today's traditional or orthodox Jews who are convinced that Judaism's active engagement with modernity does not require a formalist escape into an ideal world any more than it requires making "the demands of modernity" our prime authority. Rather, Berkovits maintained that traditional or orthodox Jews needed to develop a theology based on the grandeur of the eternal in the Torah, above all in its creative ability to bring God's voice to bear on temporal reality and reveal its true purpose and destiny. In that important quest, Eliezer Berkovits can continue to be a guide, now more easily because of the devoted efforts of David Hazony.

Servants of One Sovereign Master

GOD, LOCKE, AND EQUALITY. By JEREMY WALDRON. *Cambridge University Press. 263 pp. $22 paper.*

***Reviewed by* Robert T. Miller**

THE ACCOUNT OF human equality that we find in the mature writings of John Locke is "as well-worked out a theory of basic equality as we have in the canon of political philosophy," says Jeremy Waldron, the Maurice and Hilda Friedman Professor of Law at Columbia University and one of the leading legal and political philosophers of our time. But it is the sequel to this assertion that makes Waldron's latest book, *God, Locke, and Equality,* so significant, for Waldron argues not only that Locke's theory of human equality has essentially Christian foundations, but that this Christian theory of human equality may be essential to the liberal, egalitarian state. This is a fascinating book.

Waldron is concerned with what he calls basic equality—not a policy aim of ensuring equality of, say, wealth or income, but "our deeper commitment to treating all human beings as equals—a commitment which seems to underlie our particular egalitarian aims." Waldron quotes Locke's famous statement that human beings are by nature in a state "of equality, wherein all the power and jurisdiction is reciprocal, no one having more than another," each of us "equal to the greatest and subject to nobody"; and he argues that Locke accorded this principle of basic human equality "the strongest grounding that a principle could have: it was an axiom of theology, understood as perhaps the most important truth about God's way with the world in regard to the social and political implications of His creation of the human person."

The argument begins with human nature, made, according to Genesis, in the image and likeness of God. Agreeing with the traditional view that this verse refers to man's intellectual nature, Locke faces a problem, for equality requires a sharp distinction between, on the one hand, those beings each of whom is the equal of the rest, and, on the other, all other beings. But intellectual capacity clearly comes in degrees, and "there is a greater distance between some men and others in this respect," Locke says, "than between some men and some beasts." Why not, asks Waldron, abandon equality and assume that our treatment of others be somehow proportionate to their intellectual capacity?

THE SOLUTION IS A purportedly sharp distinction between those beings that

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have (in Locke's words) the "power of abstracting" and those that do not. In Waldron's gloss, this is "the capacity to reason on the basis of general ideas," and it is the intellectual capacity that is characteristically human. Brute animals never reach it, and if, because of infirmity or injury some human beings lack it as well, then Locke is prepared to say that such individuals do not participate in basic human equality. This does not mean, of course, that they are not morally entitled to certain kinds of good treatment, but it does justify their exclusion from, say, participation in the political community. The severely retarded and the insane, in other words, are not entitled to the same political rights as citizens with normal mental capacities.

Waldron argues, however, that there has to be some reason why exactly this minimum level of intellectual capacity is morally significant, and it is precisely here that theology comes into play. For with just this minimum level of intellectual capacity, human beings can attain (in Locke's words) "to the knowledge of their Maker and the sight of their own duties." Indeed, "the visible marks of extraordinary wisdom and power appear so plainly," Locke says, "that a rational creature who will but seriously reflect on them cannot miss the discovery of a Deity." In Waldron's explanation, therefore, the point of singling out the characteristically human power of thinking with general ideas is that any being with this power is one who can "know about the existence of God and who is therefore in a position to answer responsibly to His commandments." "Because creatures capable of abstraction can be conceived," Waldron says, quoting Locke, "as 'all the servants of one Sovereign Master, sent into the world by His order and about His business,' we must treat them as 'His property, whose workmanship they are, made to last during His, not one another's, pleasure,' and refrain from destroying or harming or exploiting them."

Waldron is at pains to show that Locke means, quite literally, that anyone with normal mental faculties can know by natural reason that God exists and has established a natural law that we are obligated to obey. Although sensitive to the fact that, say, the day laborers of his time had virtually no formal education and little leisure for metaphysical speculation, Locke is confident that they will nevertheless be able to work out these conclusions on their own. According to Waldron, Locke thought "the capacities and dispositions of ordinary people were much more reliable morally and politically than the effete, corrupt sensibility of 'all-knowing doctors' and 'learned disputants.'" In short, everyone with normal mental faculties is required to reason to the existence of God.

FOR LOCKE, WHOSE religious views were not always clearly articulated but were surely Protestant, this claim is extraordinary, for most Protestant denominations eschew such claims about the powers of human reason. The doctrine that the existence of God can be rationally demonstrated is a characteristically Catholic one—indeed, it is a dogma of the Catholic faith defined by the First Vatican Council. But much more modest than Locke's, the Catholic position was never that the demonstration of God's existence was an easy or obvious one that everyone with normal mental faculties was expected to complete. Thomas Aquinas, for example, readily conceded that demonstrations of this kind are understood "only by a few men, and then only after long study and with a great admixture of errors" (*Summa Theologiae*, Ia, 1, 1). When Waldron argues that the foundations of Locke's account of basic human equality are essentially theological, therefore, we should bear in mind that one of the theological premises is at home neither in most forms of Protestantism nor in Catholicism.

Waldron never discusses the obvious objection here—namely, that while philosophers of religion disagree vehemently about whether the existence of God can be demonstrated, surely it strains credulity to think that anyone with normal mental faculties will be able to discover a con-

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vincing proof. Waldron is rightly concerned to show that, since this knowledge is the basis of human equality, Locke also thought that it is widely available, and in assembling texts from Locke to prove that he thought this, Waldron is surely convincing. But as to the inherent truth of the assertion, Waldron has little to say, not even mentioning the nature of the proof that Locke thinks is so simple and so persuasive. The reader who looks it up in Locke (the necessity for which tends, I think, to undercut Locke's assertion that everyone can discover the proof for himself) will learn that the argument in the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* is a version of the traditional cosmological argument presented, I think, with less than customary clarity.

LET US RETURN, however, to Waldron's reconstruction of Locke. We have, so far, all human beings with normal mental faculties reasoning (or able to reason, if they merely gave it some time and attention) to the existence of God and our common responsibility to Him under the natural law. Thus far, though the account is surely religious, it is not specifically Christian. Christianity enters because, although by natural reason we can know the existence of a natural law and our general responsibility to conform our conduct to it, we cannot know its full content. In Waldron's account, "there is no philosophical demonstration of morality"; on the contrary, to know how to live, we need "teaching drawn from or inspired by elementary Christian doctrine." All of us must reason "to the existence of God using the basic capacities of human rationality and to the idea of oneself as a person required to obey Him" and then turn our attention "to what God has taught and revealed, and the integration of all that into a roughly reasoned compendium of duty." According to Locke in the *Reasonableness of Christianity*, Christ is "one manifestly sent from God and coming with visible authority from Him," and so, in Waldron's account, "the teachings of Jesus Christ, underwritten by the miracles that demonstrate his credentials, inspired by the example of his life and ministry," are "the clearest basis for our knowledge of and obedience to the natural law." We cannot "get very far towards the truth about property and economy," for example, without at least some specifically Judeo-Christian content.

But we live in a pluralistic democratic society in which Christian teachings command nothing like universal assent. What are we to make of this Christian theory of equality? Is this the theory that Waldron himself accepts? As to the latter question, Waldron is cagey, but he finally says that he is "inclined to believe that a commitment to human equality is most coherent and attractive when it is grounded in theological truth, truths associated particularly with the Christian heritage." As to the former question, Waldron makes three provocative points. First, he refers to the Rawlsian view that in the sphere of politics and public reason there should be admitted only arguments that we can reasonably expect all others involved to accept (and thus no sectarian arguments like those essential to Locke's theory of equality), and he then argues that, if we explore the foundations of our commitment to equality and discover that it is impossible to articulate certain important egalitarian commitments without appealing to their religious grounds, then the Rawlsian view is itself unreasonable. If the true theory of equality is irremediably Christian, in other words, so be it.

Second, Waldron argues (as others have as well) that Rawls' own view of an overlapping moral consensus acceptable to all reasonable persons itself has presuppositions about moral personality, justice, and goodness that are unacceptable to many people in our society—"mostly sophisticated people," Waldron wryly notes—like Nietzscheans and Freudians, who think that talk about moral agency and objective values is nonsense. But if we have to make some assumptions about morality in order to engage in politics and political theory, there is no clear reason why we may make only the modest ones Rawls would allow us, especially if these prove insufficient to support an adequate theory of basic human equality.

Third, in an argument reminiscent of Richard John Neuhaus' *The Naked Public Square*, Waldron says that "equality cannot do its work unless it is accepted among those whom it consecrates as equals," and he notes that Locke thought that such general acceptance was impossible unless equality be founded in religious teaching. "Given our experience of a world and a century in which politics and public reason have cut loose from these foundations," Waldron concludes, Locke's cautions and suspicions may well have been justified. Although this argument might be read in a merely pragmatic sense (e.g., the American people are mostly Christians, and so if they are to believe in equality, a Christian theory has the best chance of convincing them), Waldron seems to intend a more substantive claim: the Christian theory is the only one that will command widespread assent because, in fact, it's the truth.

IN SUM, *God, Locke, and Equality* is a challenging and fascinating read. I have only a few reservations. Waldron devotes extensive space to issues that will be of more interest to Locke specialists than to the average reader: what Locke thought about the economic systems of Native Americans, for example, or why he cites the Old Testament so much more than the New in the *Second Treatise on Government*. Similarly, Waldron is often at pains to save Locke from unflattering interpretations by modern academic commentators whose opinions the general reader is not likely to share, such as those of feminist scholars who

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would make Locke, who held rather enlightened views about women, into a rank misogynist. Still, Waldron compensates with rejoinders to such silliness that are often amusingly devastating. Finally, Waldron limits the very important discussion of how such an explicitly Christian theory of equality fits into to a pluralistic democratic society to the final pages of the book; it is a topic that deserves much fuller treatment.

But these criticisms mostly amount to a desire to hear more from Jeremy Waldron, especially about the Christian foundations of human equality. I expect that, soon enough, we will.

BRIEFLY NOTED

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE CHRISTIAN ORTHODOX CHURCHES. By JOHN BINNS. *Cambridge University Press. 270 pp. $22.*

The Reverend John Binns, vicar of the University Church and a director of the Institute of Orthodox Christian Studies at Cambridge University, provides this sympathetic survey of the history, theology, and current situation of the Orthodox Christian churches. While not replacing Kallistos Ware's classic account, *The Orthodox Church*, Binns' book will be helpful for Western Christians seeking to understand more about the very different experience of Eastern Christians. Indeed, Binns improves on Ware by discussing in depth not only Chalcedonian Orthodox such as the Greeks and Russians, but non-Chalcedonian Orthodox as well—Armenians, Copts, Ethiopians, and Syrians. These two families of Orthodox churches, which share much in the way of culture and spirituality, have been estranged since the Christological controversies of the fifth century, though recent years have seen a growing reconciliation. Binns effectively shows how centuries of isolation and suffering have shaped the experience of all these churches. For example, Orthodox Christians in the Ottoman empire experienced long periods of persecution as second-class citizens —sometimes called "dhimmitude"— punctuated by moments of mass murder, as in the genocide of Armenians in the early twentieth century. (Persecution of Christians in the Islamic world continues even today; Binns rightly decries the fact that Western media discuss the violation of Kurdish rights but ignore the plight of Syrian Christians in the same region of Turkey.) Binns argues that this history of oppression has contributed to Orthodoxy's intense conservatism, as well as to its focus on liturgy, which often was the only form of Christian witness allowed. He also discusses the ethnic nationalism that has been both a blessing and an obstacle to Orthodox churches—a blessing in helping them to maintain the Christian faith through centuries of persecution, and an obstacle in occasionally distracting them from that faith and in hindering cooperation in the growing Orthodox diaspora in the West. With regard to ecumenism, Binns paints a mixed picture: the beginnings of a movement toward restored communion, after 1500 years, between Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian churches, but recurring tensions between some Orthodox and both Catholics and Protestants. Throughout, Binns addresses the central task now facing the Orthodox churches: finding their way in a world informed by a resurgent Islam and an increasingly liberal and secular West.

— Mark L. Movsesian

THE NEW ANTI-CATHOLICISM: THE LAST ACCEPTABLE PREJUDICE. By PHILIP JENKINS. *Oxford University Press. 258 pp. $26.*

"Catholic-baiting," said the novelist Peter Viereck, "is the anti-Semitism of the liberals." During the recent season of scandals, Catholics have generally, and with good reason, been reluctant to point out the obvious, namely, that the media carnival was in significant part motored by old-fashioned anti-Catholicism. Jenkins, an Episcopalian, has no such inhibitions and here offers a spirited account of how deep, pervasive, and multifaceted is the elite culture's animus toward the Catholic Church. A distinguished historian at Penn State, Jenkins traces the animus back to an earlier period when "the Catholic menace" was seen as threatening American democracy, and insightfully analyzes the ways in which Catholicism is a necessary scandal to adherents of America's regnant liberalism. The bulk of the book, however, is an evenhanded narrative of more recent assaults on the Catholic Church by feminists, abortion activists, homosexuals, and the dominant media, including the dramatic changes in the way Catholicism is portrayed in movies and television. Along the way, the author provides a refreshingly sober evaluation of the recent sex abuse scandals and their sensationalized exploitation. In a time of putative tolerance and inclusiveness, the "black legends" of Catholicism continue to provide the convenient contrast by which political correctness defines itself. Jenkins ends with a plea for honesty and fairness, but seems not to expect too much on that score. Anti-Catholicism is simply too useful to too many who are bent on shaping the culture in their image.

RELIGION IN EUROPE AT THE END OF THE SECOND MILLENNIUM. By ANDREW M. GREELEY. *Transaction. 192 pp. $34.95.*

Priest-sociologist Andrew Greeley is a born and self-cultivated contrarian, and he here takes on the conventional wisdom that religion—meaning Christianity and Catholicism in particular—is dead or dying in Europe.

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Greeley asks: Compared to what or when? At the end of the first millennium, he says, the smart money would have bet that Europe would become Muslim or Nordic or Slavic pagan, or maybe Byzantine Christian. That didn't happen then, and those who are now putting their money on the inexorable force of "secularization" will probably turn out to be wrong as well, Greeley argues. Sometimes his argument requires a very broad definition of religion, meaning little more than a comprehensive belief system that tries to make sense of reality. And he grants that the secularization thesis gets strong support from Britain, France, and the Netherlands. But in Europe more generally, the picture he offers on the basis of the findings of survey research is much more mixed. In some of the post-Communist countries, notably Poland, Catholicism is flourishing, and almost everywhere young people are more sympathetic than their parents to elements of Christian belief such as the promise of eternal life. Greeley acknowledges that the arguments and evidences he musters are not definitive, but he thinks they are strong enough to pose a serious challenge to the secularization theories of many of his fellow social scientists. He is right on both scores.

SISTERS: CATHOLIC NUNS AND THE MAKING OF AMERICA. By JOHN J. FIALKA. *St. Martin's. 365 pp. $27.95.*

Of the more than four hundred religious orders for women in this country that forty years ago had almost 200,000 sisters running a huge empire of schools, hospitals, and other enterprises, the author, a journalist with the *Wall Street Journal*, focuses on the history of the Sisters of Mercy. The founding of the "Mercies" in Ireland, their high adventures in taming both hordes of Catholic immigrants and the American West, and their heroic role in caring for the wounded and dying in the Civil War is an undeservedly neglected chapter of American history that evokes deep admiration for these women of extraordinary competence, courage, and holiness. This is followed by the dreary story of fragmentation and decline following Vatican Council II, when, under the guidance of progressive male theologians and the countercultural churnings of the 1960s, the Mercies and most other orders committed a kind of institutional suicide, abandoning habits, disciplines, and communal life in favor of liberation into oblivion. While a few orders of

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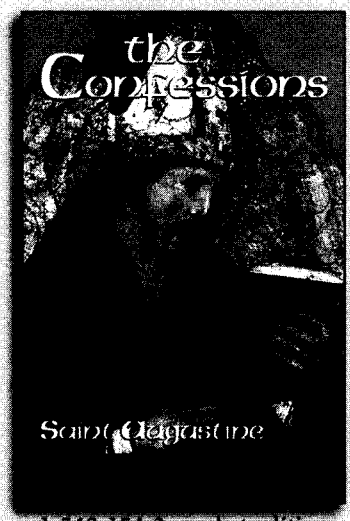

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women religious that resisted the Zeitgeist are vibrant and growing, there are today only 75,000 nuns and the average age is nearly seventy. A fuller and more sharply edged account of the decline is Ann Carey's *Sisters in Crisis* (Our Sunday Visitor, 1997). Fialka concludes with indecisive and unpersuasive musings about whether ordaining women to the priesthood might not be a way to revive the heroic charisms of the past.

RELIGION RETURNS TO THE PUBLIC SQUARE: FAITH AND POLICY IN AMERICA. Edited by HUGH HECLO and WILFRED M. MCCLAY. *Woodrow Wilson Center. 382 pp. $22.50 paper.*

As the subtitle indicates, some of these essays are focused on the more direct influence of religion on specific public policies. Others, notably those by Wilfred McClay and D. G. Hart, take on larger questions of cultural conflicts, secularization, and the ways in which religion is an inescapable part of our public language. These authors generously acknowledge the role of this journal and its Editor-in-Chief in reshaping the discussion of culture, politics, and religion in a way that could not have been anticipated a few decades ago. Although most of the arguments will be familiar to FT readers, the essays are almost all of high quality, and James Reichley's double-entendred "Faith in Politics" is of particular interest.

CHRISTIAN LANGUAGE AND ITS MUTATIONS. By DAVID MARTIN. *Ashgate. 219 pp. $29.95 paper.*

Essays by one of the world's foremost sociologists of religion on subjects ranging from sacred music, the eschatological significance of the city, the explosive growth of Christianity in the southern hemisphere, and (contra John Milbank and company) the legitimacy of the sociological study of Christianity. With his erudition, good humor, and elegance of expression, David Martin casts in a fresh light almost every topic on which he touches. He is in some ways a traditionalist Anglican who has, among other things, led the battle for the Book of Common Prayer, but he is a traditionalist in the honorable tradition of Christian thinkers who engage the avant garde in the confidence that truth, whether presented as old or new, is always on friendly terms with truth.

HUMAN NATURE AND THE FREEDOM OF PUBLIC RELIGIOUS EXPRESSION. By STEPHEN G. POST. *University of Notre Dame Press. 152 pp. $18 paper.*

The author is professor of bioethics at Case Western Reserve University, and he here makes a convincing case that it is long past time for us to stop tying ourselves into philosophical, psychological, and legal knots in trying to deny the obvious. The obvious is that people are, in maddeningly diverse ways, religious, and that the way people are is a public reality to be welcomed in order to make our common life more authentically human. Post draws on many sources, perhaps most originally on the neurosciences, to show that what we know about human nature increasingly confirms what has been taught all along by natural law theorists. This book is a valuable addition to the growing literature proposing promising alternatives to what has been called the naked public square.

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE ALTAR. By PAUL E. DINTER. *Farrar, Straus & Giroux. 240 pp. $23.*

Subtitled "one man's life in the Catholic priesthood," this memoir by a priest ordained in the 1970s who left the priesthood and married more than twenty years later, is in the large, if not entirely venerable, genre of ex-nun and ex-priest stories. Dinter understood himself from the beginning to be a rebel of pretty standard left-liberal proclivities, and his critique of the Church and priesthood pushes the usual buttons, with priestly celibacy as the dominant complaint. The author believes he was and is faithful to the Church mandated by the Second Vatican Council, and, amidst the dreary depiction of the priesthood of others, his own creative and dedicated ministry stands out, by his account, as almost singular. As sour and spiritually superficial as the book is, it is not devoid of lessons that can be inferred for helping others avoid the author's bitter experience.

ADVENTURES IN ORTHODOXY. By DWIGHT LONGENECKER. *Sophia Institute. 163 pp. $14.95 paper.*

Somebody, perhaps it was the author, described this as "a Chestertonian romp through the Apostles' Creed." It is, as the title suggests, an adventurous romp, and a rewarding one. Longenecker, a former Anglican priest who is now a Catholic, is a gifted writer who has a knack for presenting the great mysteries in a manner filled with "a-ha moments" for the general reader.

AMERICA'S RELIGIONS: FROM THEIR ORIGINS TO THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY. By PETER W. WILLIAMS. *University of Illinois Press. 601 pp. $29.95 paper.*

When the subject is as vast and various as religion in America, even a once-over-lightly treatment makes for a very big book. Expanding and updating a 1990 edition, Williams writes from a moderately liberal perspective that accents pluralism and process over substance and critical analysis. Includes a valuable bibliography of more than fifty pages.

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APPARITIONS OF MODERN SAINTS. By PATRICIA TREECE. *Servant. 289 pp. $13.99 paper.*

To a subject often treated with fevered credulity, an experienced journalist offers a calmly appreciative approach, reporting accounts of numerous appearances by, and messages from, such as Thérèse of Lisieux, Padre Pio, and Don Bosco. A useful appendix debunks the book by John G. Neihardt, *Black Elk Speaks*, which is used in many public schools to demonstrate the superiority of Native American shamanism over Christianity, which was precisely Neihardt's purpose. In historical fact, Black Elk spent his adult life as a devoutly Catholic evangelist and catechist among the Lakota Sioux Indians. *Apparitions of Modern Saints* will not be everybody's cup of tea, but, for those who are ready for it, the book opens a window on dimensions of reality much stranger than most of us dare to imagine.

DARWIN'S RELIGIOUS ODYSSEY. By WILLIAM E. PHIPPS. *Trinity. 206 pp. $16 paper.*

The author sets out to counter those who view Darwin as an enemy of Christianity and demonstrates that he espoused an operatively atheistic materialism that made him, well, an enemy of Christianity. A kindly enemy, to be sure, who did not want to hurt more than necessary the sensibilities of his Christian friends.

HOW MUCH IS ENOUGH? HUNGERING FOR GOD IN AN AFFLUENT CULTURE. By ARTHUR SIMON. *Baker. 192 pp. $11.99 paper.*

The founder of Bread for the World, a liberal lobbying group, addresses Christians who are open to the idea that their spiritual discontent has its roots in satiety. Friends of market economics will question some of his claims about what would really help the poor, but Simon's chief target is consumerism, and readers in thrall to that vice may welcome his liberating proposals.

THE BALLAD OF THE WHITE HORSE. By G. K. CHESTERTON. *Ignatius. 230 pp. $19.95.*

An epic poem that has been changing lives since its first publication in 1911. Ignatius Press has rendered a great service in bringing out the 1928 edition with the marvelous woodcuts by Robert Austin and complete critical notes by Sister Bernadette Sheridan, who has devoted much of her life to the study of the poem. The *Ballad* is to be read out loud, preferably with friends. It is a thumping, lyrical, bracing, clashing, and strangely peaceful affirmation of the Christian view of history as a continuing battle between good and evil, waged in the confidence of victory over barbarians old and new.

THE EMPEROR'S HANDBOOK. By MARCUS AURELIUS. *Scribner. 148 pp. $20.*

"What an infinitesimal fraction of time's fathomless abyss is assigned to each of us! An instant, and it flickers out in eternity. What a speck in the plenitude of being we are! What a crumb in the bounty of life! How tiny on this broad earth the clod we crawl upon! Be mindful of all this, think nothing important except to do what your nature directs and to endure what the universal nature sends." The foregoing is a taste of the bracingly straightforward style of this new translation by Scot and David Hicks, which may well lead a lot of people who thought him a drone in high school to give Marcus Aurelius, that noble pagan, another hearing.

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THE PUBLIC SQUARE

A Continuing Survey of Religion and Public Life

Richard John Neuhaus

Christian Unity: Beginning Again, Again

Call it a pause or a hiatus or a bump in the road or a dead end. Such are among the ways in which informed parties describe the present moment in what forty years ago was less problematically referred to as "the ecumenical movement." There is no doubt that the search for a more visible unity among Christians has fallen upon hard times. One result of the Second Vatican Council was that the Catholic Church "entered the ecumenical movement" that is usually dated from the Edinburgh Missionary Conference of 1910. That movement was a mainline/oldline Protestant affair with significant Orthodox participation, and the Catholic Church entered it just as it was beginning to fall apart. Today it appears that the Catholic Church is the only coherent part of the ecumenical movement left. Some go so far as to say that, if there still is an ecumenical movement, it *is* the Catholic Church.

The state of Christian unity—both its presence and absence—is the concern of an important new initiative called "The Princeton Proposal for Christian Unity," the product of three years of discussion under the auspices of the Center for Catholic and Evangelical Theology, publisher of the distinguished theological journal *Pro Ecclesia*. The Princeton Proposal is set forth in a little book edited by Carl Braaten and Robert Jenson, *In One Body Through the Cross* (Eerdmans, 62 pp., $10 paper). The papers prepared for the project are promised in other volumes from Eerdmans. *In One Body* is part provocation, part plea, and part proposal for action. Faced by the long stall in anything that can believably be described as ecumenical progress, the Princeton Proposal is marked by a certain poignancy. Its architects say they have no idea whether it will achieve anything. It is a matter of casting bread upon the waters. Minimally, the proposal is aimed at generating, or re-generating, a measure of sanctified dissatisfaction with a state of disunity that scandalously contradicts what Christians claim to believe.

The Princeton Proposal is a determinedly unofficial initiative, speaking to but not for the several communions. In this, it is similar to the *Groupe des Dombes*, founded in 1937, and the more recent "Evangelicals and Catholics Together." The sixteen signers include two Roman Catholics, two Orthodox, and two evangelical Protestants. The rest are from the Protestant oldline, with almost half of them being Lutheran. So the participants are not, and make no pretense of being, representative of world Christianity. Included, however, are prominent players in the ecumenical efforts of recent decades such as Geoffrey Wainwright, William Rusch, Michael Root, and, *primus inter pares*, George Lindbeck of Yale. These are people who have been through the turnings and churnings of modern ecumenism; they pioneered breakthroughs, fought on the barricades, and now, in the afterglow of promises failed, are eminently qualified to assess what went wrong and what might be done about it. Attention must be paid the Princeton Proposal.

A Moment Betrayed

The future does not lie with the ecumenical movement dating from Edinburgh 1910 and its related institutions such as the World Council of Churches and, in the U.S., the National Council of Churches. That movement and its institutions have become part of the problem. The editors of *In One Body* write, "The institutions of conciliar ecumenism are largely captive to a 'new ecumenical paradigm' which subordinates the concern of the 'faith and order' movement, for the visible unity of Christians, to social and political

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agendas which are themselves divisive. The wisdom of the first general secretary of the World Council of Churches, Willem Visser 't Hooft, 'The World Council of Churches is either a Christocentric movement or it is nothing at all,' now carries little weight." In sum, the WCC and related programs have become the antithesis of the ecumenism they were founded to advance.

The Princeton Proposal is driven by theological concern, and the document admirably sets forth, on the basis of Scripture and sacred tradition, why the quest for visible Christian unity is not optional. Guided by the prayer of the Church's Lord in John 17, the signers declare that the statement of the 1961 World Council assembly at New Delhi remains "the most adequate and comprehensive description" of the unity that we must seek. New Delhi said:

> [This unity] is being made visible as all in each place who are baptized into Jesus Christ and confess him as Lord and Savior are brought by the Holy Spirit into one fully committed fellowship, holding the one apostolic faith, preaching the one gospel, breaking the one bread, joining in common prayer, and having a corporate life reaching out in witness and service to all and who at the same time are united with the whole Christian fellowship in all places and all ages, in such wise that ministry and members are accepted by all, and that all can act and speak together as occasion requires for the tasks to which God calls His people.

That vision is from a very long time ago; we are very far from its realization; and it has been betrayed by the movement that gave it birth. But, says the Princeton Proposal, it remains the vision that frames our hope for the future. In the service of that vision, it is recognized that "some churches and Christian movements have special responsibilities in our time." The signers then address a specific word to Roman Catholics, evangelical Protestants, and the Orthodox.

If Things Were Not as They Are

Not least because it includes more than half the Christians in the world, the Catholic Church has a "unique role." "While the papacy is undoubtedly a continuing stumbling block for many, the Bishop of Rome is also the only historical plausible candidate to exercise an effective worldwide ministry of unity." The Magisterium of the Catholic Church "must teach in a fashion capable of shaping the minds of the faithful beyond those currently in communion with Rome." It is noted that the Catholic Church has made an "irrevocable" commitment to the quest for Christian unity, and it is proposed that the commitment would be enhanced were non-Catholics more fully consulted in theological deliberations of the Magisterium. "If the Bishop of Rome is to teach for and to all the baptized, he must receive reliable counsel regarding the faith and life of the entire Christian community." Such a formal arrangement for ongoing consultation would seem to be eminently doable, and, in fact, has been urged by responsible parties in Rome.

As for evangelical and Pentecostal Christians, it is noted that "all churches may benefit from their vitality, their zeal for evangelism, and their commitment to Scripture." But evangelicals and Pentecostals should, it is urged, give up their separatist ways. "Rather than employing their resources solely to benefit their own fellowship or to call fellow Christians out of their fellowships, they should work for the health of all Christian communities." Such statements bear the mark of a wan hope that evangelicals and Pentecostals should be other than who they are. With some exceptions, their free-church traditions—grounded in experiential individualism and an ecclesiology of associational voluntarism marked by competitive entrepreneurship—puts them at odds with the vision of Christian unity set forth by New Delhi and the Princeton Proposal.

Equally wan is the word to the Orthodox. The necessary things are said about Orthodoxy's fidelity to ancient tradition and her riches of liturgy and spirituality. And then this: "Yet, regretfully, the Orthodox churches have clung also to divisive and nationalistic proclivities. These should be abandoned. If that were done, the Orthodox witness would be enhanced, to the great benefit of all Christians." If that were done. If there were any promising response to John Paul II's earnest plea in *Ut Unum Sint* for reconciliation between East and West. If Orthodoxy would abandon its divisive and nationalistic ways, and its penchant for claiming to be, quite simply and without remainder, the Church. If so many things were not as they are. It is no criticism of the Princeton Proposal to say that, in this connection, it might as aptly be called the Princeton Prayer.

Waiting on the Spirit

While the document addresses a special word to Catholics, Orthodox, and evangelicals, it is noteworthy that there is no special word to the mainline/oldline communions. The reason for that is certainly not that the signers think the communions associated with the old "conciliar ecumenism" are doing just fine. Perhaps it is, rather, that they don't expect much from oldline groups such as the United Methodists, Presbyterians USA, and ELCA Lutherans. The proposal appears to

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be somewhat ambivalent about various "renewal" and "confessional" movements within such communions. On the one hand, such movements represent a hope for the restoration of theological substance and seriousness. On the other, a strengthened Presbyterian or Wesleyan or Lutheran "identity" could reinforce differences that accent Christian divisions, and thus undermine hope for the unity envisioned by New Delhi. This tension, or perhaps it is a contradiction, is recognized but not resolved in the Princeton Proposal.

Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger has said on several occasions that the way forward toward Christian unity is largely hidden from us. We must, he says, prayerfully await an unforeseeable and unanticipatable intervention of the Holy Spirit. Meanwhile, as John Paul II has repeatedly asserted, the Catholic Church's commitment to the ecumenical task is indeed "irrevocable." In season and out of season, whether the interest of others waxes or wanes, the Catholic Church will persist in theological dialogue with everyone, and in exploring every possible opening toward the uncompromisable goal of full communion among all Christians.

Some view that quest as quixotic; for Catholics it is an unavoidable imperative that comes with being—together with all who are baptized and confess Jesus as Lord—the Church. Perhaps in this millennium—which John Paul says must be the millennium of unity as the last was the millennium of divisions—the unanticipatable intervention of the Spirit will come from the explosive growth of Christianity in the southern hemisphere. Nobody knows. We can only try to be prepared. The Princeton Proposal intensifies our dissatisfaction with the disunity that is, and points us toward the unity that, through ways unknowable, may one day be. It is not a road map. It is a call to fidelity, which is where authentic ecumenism begins, and must ever begin again.

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WHY AREN'T MUSLIMS LIKE US?

There is no secret about my great respect for Bernard Lewis. He is one of the wisest guides in trying to understand the history and contemporary perplexities of Islam. (See my extended discussion of his book *What Went Wrong?* Public Square, May 2002.) The greater, therefore, is the disappointment with his essay in the May 2003 issue of the *Atlantic*, "I'm Right, You're Wrong, Go to Hell." He notes, correctly, that the two expansive and civilization-defining world religions today are Christianity and Islam. Both of them, he says, have a problem with tolerance, never mind mutual respect, toward other religions. That's because they think they have the final truth revealed by God and everybody else is going to go to hell.

"Other religions," he writes, "such as Judaism and most of the religions of Asia, concede that human beings may use different religions to speak to God, as they use different languages to speak to one another." Among Christians, says Lewis, there are triumphalists and relativists, and Lewis is on the side of the relativists. "The triumphalist view is increasingly under attack in Christendom, and is disavowed by significant numbers of Christian clerics. There is little sign as yet of a parallel development in Islam."

In fact, only a minority of Christians—usually evangelical Protestants of a fundamentalist bent—say that all non-Christians are on their way to hell. Although one can find variant views over the centuries, the Catholic Church, which includes more than half the two billion Christians in the world, emphatically teaches that God denies nobody—Jew, Muslim, Buddhist, whatever—the grace necessary to salvation. While the fullness of the means of salvation is given in the Church and is necessary for those who understand that, nobody is outside the possibility of saving grace. Whether they act on the grace offered by God is another matter. This is not "relativism." As reiterated in the 1990 encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* and the 2000 instruction from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Dominus Iesus*, the teaching is that everyone who is saved is saved through the redemptive work of Christ, whether or not they have ever heard of Christ. One does not expect Bernard Lewis to be an authority on Christian theology, while at the same time one is reminded of the dangers in speaking with confidence on subjects with which one has scant familiarity.

Yet more troubling is the message that Islam, in order to become less of a threat to the world, must relativize its claim to possess the truth. That plays directly into the hands of Muslim rigorists who pose as the defenders of the uncompromised and uncompromisible truth and who call for death to the infidels. If Islam is to become tolerant and respectful of other religions, it must be as the result of a development that comes from within the truth of Islam, not as a result of relativizing or abandoning that truth. Is Islam capable of such a religious development? Nobody knows. But, if the choice is between compromising Islamic truth or a war of civilizations, it is almost certain that the winner among Muslims will

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be the hard-core Islamism that Lewis rightly views as such a great threat.

Christianity is more, not less, vibrantly Christian as a result of coming to understand more fully the mysterious and loving ways of God in His dealings also with non-Christians. Although the story of this development is complex, the important truth is that tolerance and mutual respect are religious, not secular, achievements. I will say it again: the reason we do not kill one another over our disagreements about the will of God is that we believe it is against the will of God to kill one another over our disagreements about the will of God. Christians have come to believe that. We must hope that more and more Muslims will come to believe that. That will not happen, however, if they are told that coming to believe that will make them less faithful Muslims. Or, as Bernard Lewis puts it, that they become relativists.

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THE CONSERVATISM OF ANDREW SULLIVAN

"As a simple empirical matter, we are all sodomites now, but only homosexuals bear the burden of the legal and social stigma." Thus says Andrew Sullivan in a long article in the *New Republic* occasioned by the Texas law against sodomy now before the Supreme Court. As he has done many times before, Mr. Sullivan presents himself as a Catholic who is trying to help the Church update its antiquated views on human sexuality. And again he misrepresents, and then triumphantly rebuts, a crazy-quilt of arguments which he attributes to Aquinas and other worthies, including contemporary natural law theorists. Finally, for Mr. Sullivan, what is "natural" is what people actually do, and what people actually do sexually should not be censured so long as it is "private, adult, and consensual." Most people do not adhere to the Church's teaching that the sexual act is rightly ordered within the unitive and procreative bond of marriage. People do all kinds of disordered and downright kinky things and therefore are, says Mr. Sullivan, de facto sodomites. Here, as Mr. Sullivan is given to saying, is the money quote:

"It is hard to see why . . . sexual pleasure, fantasy, and escape are somehow inimical to human flourishing—and there's plenty of evidence that their permanent or too-rigid suppression does actual psychological and spiritual harm. Relationships that include sexual adventure and passion and experimentation are not relationships of 'disintegrated' people but relationships in which trust is the prerequisite for relief, release, and renewal. The meaning of these sexual experiences is as varied as the people in them. And there are many contexts in which to understand these sexual experiences other than as purely procreative. You can think of sex—within marriage and in other relationships—as a form of bonding; as a way to deepen and expand the meaning of intimacy; as a type of language even, where human beings can communicate subtly, beautifully, passionately, without words. And, in a world where our consumer needs are exquisitely matched by markets, in which bourgeois comfort can almost anesthetize a sense of human risk and adventure, sex remains one of the few realms left where we can explore our deepest longings, where we can travel to destinations whose meaning and dimensions we cannot fully know. It liberates and exhilarates in ways few other experiences still can. Yes, taking this to extremes can be destructive. And yes, if this experience trumps or overwhelms other concerns—the vows of marriage, the trust of a faithful relationship, the duty we bear to children—then it can be a social harm. But the idea that expressing this human freedom is somehow intrinsically and always immoral, that it somehow destroys the soul, is an idea whose validity is simply denied in countless lives and loves."

A Matter of Taste

Mr. Sullivan, who is a conservative on some matters, is, in principle if not in disposition, a sexual libertine. This is disguised from some by his sleight of hand in contending that "gay marriage" would bring homosexual excesses under the domesticating influence of a conventional institution. But he leaves no doubt that such unions are but one of innumerable choices homosexuals might make in the pursuit of "sexual adventure and passion and experimentation." He allows that "taking this to extremes can be destructive," but who is to say what is extreme, especially if such adventure is private, adult, and consensual? Answering that question was exactly the project of Michel Foucault with his "limit experiences" in the bathhouses of San Francisco before he died of AIDS. The above statement by Sullivan could as well have been made by Norman O. Brown in his defense of the unbridled libido, which he marketed as "polymorphous perversity." Mr. Sullivan likely deems the positions of such as Foucault and Brown to be extreme, meaning that they are not to his taste, although he has written elsewhere about the erotic charms of anonymous sex with strangers.

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A couple of months ago a major Catholic university held a symposium on "the reconstruction of Catholic sexual ethics," and invited me to debate Andrew Sullivan. I declined. Mr. Sullivan has no interest whatever in reconstructing a Catholic sexual ethic, or any other kind of ethic that might propose constraints or moral orderings on the satisfaction of sexual desires, apart from a few narrowly defined causes of possible "social harm." The meaning—including moral meaning—of sexual relationships "is as varied as the people in them." That some things might be right or wrong "is an idea whose validity is simply denied in countless lives and loves" of people who have persuaded themselves that their ways of pursuing adventure, passion, and experimentation is right for them. Mr. Sullivan knows that living in defiance of Christian morality does not imperil the soul—nothing "destroys" the soul—because his soul and the souls of others who do likewise are in such great shape. Such is the perfect circularity of moral solipsism.

Mr. Sullivan is a self-declared sodomite. In his writing about his own proclivities and practices, he presents himself as a conservative sodomite. Manifestly uneasy about being a bad Catholic, he does not, like other bad Catholics, confess his sin, but writes endlessly about why the Church is wrong and he is right about what he and others do. Perhaps sensing that he is not getting much of anywhere with that argument, he resorts to declaring, "We are all sodomites now." The discerning reader will recognize that as the tu quoque defense (You're one, too), the last refuge of the defender of the indefensible.

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WHAT SACRED ARCHITECTURE IS FOR

Good. Somebody has said it and said it well. So, with no further ado, I will let Duncan Stroik, editor of *Sacred Architecture*, say it: "Everywhere I went in Italy last summer, save the eternal city, churches were asking an admission fee. The explanation was given that it costs a lot to maintain these buildings and keep them open and so it should be the responsibility of everyone who uses them to help pay for their upkeep. If this seems like a reasonable request, it is also a major contradiction with the purpose of a church. In Florence, charging for admissions started with the baptistery and the museum of the duomo—a nuisance that did not prevent visits or prayer in the church proper. Then it spread to the Brancacci chapel by Massacio, the New Sacristy by Michelangelo, and the burial chapel of the Medicis at the parish church of San Lorenzo. More recently San Lorenzo itself and the Dominican church of Santa Maria Novella have begun charging entrance fees. And while these churches only allow paying customers during the week, at the Franciscan church of Santa Croce an equally problematic attitude is exhibited: people are not allowed to enter on Sunday morning *unless* they are going to mass. These are churches which every tour group, pilgrimage group, art and architecture class should stop off to see, to draw, to visit, and to pray in. Now many will not make the visit, given time and money. Even worse, and more detrimental to the sacred character of the buildings, they will no longer be places for the faithful of the city. Without the love, care, and affection of the nonnas, the youth on their way to class, the workers on a break, and other faithful, these buildings will become simply museums. Florence, they say, is a city of museums and now ever more so.

"Venice also is so full of art and architecture and so lacking in permanent residents that tourists seem to take over. In Venice the Chorus foundation was formed by the Archdiocese in order to restore some of their magnificent churches and their sacred art. A worthwhile task, but it also means that fourteen of the major churches including the Frari and the Redentore are entrance by admission only. There are several benefits of this, of course: the buildings stay clean, unwanted beggars and graduate students are kept out, and all art lovers are protected from the distraction of people kneeling, praying, and lighting candles. Pay-per-view religion is a very contemporary idea and offers a new way to charge for indulgences. Now, it is also true that most of these churches are open for 'free' during one daily mass, and paid staff ensure that visitors participate in the liturgy and are prevented from looking at artwork or visiting side chapels. That should be done during normal business hours. We can be sure that Veronese, Bellini, Palladio, and Longhena would be surprised to know that Third Millennium Man believes he can separate faith and art. Other churches such as Santa Maria dei Miracoli, having lost their parishioners or religious congregations, have dispensed with the daily or weekly mass altogether and have become galleries of sacred art, with the occasional Vivaldi concert or upper-class wedding.

A Disconnect Between Faith and Art

"What a lost opportunity. Here are buildings constructed by the faithful and the finest artists and

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architects throughout the centuries, more beautiful than ever but not really serving their highest purpose: the praise of God and the bestowal of grace on men. Catholic art, along with the rich tradition of sacred music, continues to speak to people of differing cultural and religious backgrounds. Is this not an opportunity to be hospitable, to welcome the saint, the sinner, and the prodigal? Is not the cost of keeping our churches open, offering the liturgy, and reserving the Eucharist a price the Church can afford, no matter the monetary price?

"These developments bode poorly for the Church in Italy, and for Catholics everywhere. They signal the acceptance of the disconnection between faith and art for modern man, which during the past two centuries has been advocated by the avant garde. The separation of worship and devotion from beauty and art is schizophrenic for a Church that believes in the necessity of sacrament. I am sure that many tourists will get used to paying for church, while the faithful on pilgrimage or tour should be scandalized. 'But we only want to go in to pray at the tomb of Saint (Francis, Monica, Ignatius, Thérèse, etc.) or see the miraculous image.' 'I am sorry but you will have to either pay the admission price or come back on Sunday.'" (*Sacred Architecture* is published semiannually. Subscribe for $9.95 by writing P.O. Box 556, Notre Dame, Indiana 46556.)

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RENEWAL DEFERRED

Heroic is the word for the labors of Dorothy Rabinowitz in exposing the mad frenzy of accusations against child care workers and others in the 1980s and 1990s. Across the country, people were arrested, tried, and in many cases jailed on allegations of mass rapes, satanic rituals, and other bizarre practices. Zealous prosecutors claimed to be stamping out an epidemic of abuse, child-abuse experts coached and coerced young children to tell tall tales, psychologists peddled fantastic theories to juries, and judges caved in to pressures to "protect the children." In a particularly egregious instance of 1995, more than forty residents of Wenatchee, Washington, were arrested on fake charges of, among other things, ritually raping children at their church.

Thanks in large part to Rabinowitz's relentless reporting, mainly in the *Wall Street Journal*, the panic was exposed, charges were dropped, sentences were reversed, and most, but not all, of the convicted have been released from jail. Now Rabinowitz has brought the pieces of the story together in a chilling book, *No Crueler Tyrannies: Accusation, False Witness, and Other Terrors of Our Times* (Free Press, $25). The reviewer in the *New York Times* writes: "Rabinowitz has been a proud and sometimes lonely crusader. Her book, even with its gaps in perspective and context, makes for enraging reading." That may be a typo. Perhaps the reviewer meant "engaging" reading. But enraging will do. The reviewer thinks Rabinowitz is somewhat too one-sided, however. She writes, "After all, there are charges of sex abuse that prove to be true—just look at the scandal that has overtaken the Roman Catholic Church."

Back to the Long Lent

At this point I segue into a further reflection on our Long Lent that began in January of last year. Yes, there are, sad to say, some cases of priestly sex abuse that have been proved to be true in a court of law or have been admitted by perpetrators. But, thanks to the scandalous policy adopted by the bishops at Dallas last June, there are today hundreds of priests who have been suspended from ministry and have had their names publicly smeared without proof or even credible evidence. They protest their innocence, but to be accused is, for all practical purposes, to be deemed guilty. So eager are the bishops to protect the children, their diocesan purse, and their own public image. Protecting all three, and especially the children, is imperative. But what about the grave injustice to innocent priests? I know it is unpopular to even raise the question. Many bishops and enraged lay people respond that the injustice is regrettable, but it is the price to be paid.

That is a response unworthy of Christians. It is evasive, it is scapegoating, it is an abdication of moral responsibility. I am not sure why I bother writing about this. Unlike the efforts of Dorothy Rabinowitz, it is not likely to change anything. The Dallas policy, with a few modifications by Rome, is set in concrete. There will be more embarrassing headlines, notably from Los Angeles, but the fevered pitch of national scandal has subsided and is not likely to be reignited. The bishops, for the most part, got themselves off the hook. The *Boston Globe* got its Pulitzer Prize. It's back to business as usual. Renewal can wait for another day. Along the way, the Church has, in crucial respects, sacrificed to the state the right to govern itself. On a massive scale, trust has been violated, confidences broken, and reputations destroyed. Throughout it all, the gospel of sin and grace, repentance and restoration, went unspoken and undone.

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Perhaps, in time, some good priests falsely accused will be returned to the ministry to which they were called by Christ and his Church. Maybe the National Review Board, the bishops' institutionalized admission that they cannot be trusted, will come up with something pointing toward genuine reform. The promised Vatican statement on the inadmissibility of homosexuals to the priesthood is, according to some reports, still on track. Certainly the sexual abuse of teenage boys—which is what the scandal is mainly about—will not be treated cavalierly as it often was in the past, and that is a great gain.

But faithful Catholics beyond numbering view their bishops very differently now. The strange thing is that it doesn't seem to make much difference. Boston excepted, at the parish level life goes on, and there are even many reports of increased participation and giving. It is finally the Mass that holds the Catholic Church together, which is to say it is Christ in his promised presence. Reports of catastrophe and calls for renewal notwithstanding, the Church remains a community of sinners. Forgiven sinners called to be saints, to be sure, but sinners nonetheless. So it has always been and so it will be to the end of time, and for that we must be immeasurably grateful. And yet, I trust it is not ingratitude to remember that, out of the Long Lent, some of us had hoped for something more from the leaders that, for reasons He only knows, God has given us. Perhaps the unsatisfactory outcome of this unhappy time is a salutary reminder that genuine reform and renewal has to begin with each one of us. I apologize for a conclusion that limps out on a truism, but the good thing about truisms is that they are true.

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WHILE WE'RE AT IT

■ Conservative media critics are very down on CNN for its biased reporting on, among many other things, the Iraq war. I don't watch enough television to have an informed opinion on whether the criticism is fair or not. But I was struck by an op-ed piece in the *New York Times* by Eason Jordan, CNN's chief news executive. "The News We Kept to Ourselves," published after the fall of Baghdad, describes the price that CNN paid—more precisely, the price that others paid—to keep its Baghdad bureau open. Mr. Jordan says that other news organizations "were in the same bind," but he is describing CNN's experience over the past twelve years. The CNN bureau operated under the tight control of the Baghdad regime, being careful not to report bad news that might get it kicked out. Iraqis working for CNN who were "courageous enough to try to provide accurate reporting" were terrorized by the secret police. "Some vanished, never to be heard from again. Others disappeared and then surfaced later with whispered tales of being hauled off and tortured in unimaginable ways." Mr. Jordan concludes his article with this: "I felt awful about having these stories bottled up inside me. Now that Saddam Hussein's regime is gone, I suspect we will hear many, many more gut-wrenching tales from Iraqis about the decades of torment. At last, these stories can be told freely." One may sympathize with Mr. Jordan's feeling awful, but that is to miss the point rather entirely. Iraqis were brutally tortured and some paid with their lives in order for CNN to maintain its bureau in Baghdad. And why did CNN need a bureau in Baghdad? The obvious answer is found in the creed of a free press that reporters have a moral duty to tell the truth and the public has a right to know. But in this case CNN, and presumably other news organizations, very deliberately did not tell the truth, and made sure that the public did not know. It would seem that people were tortured and killed, and those in charge were responsible for betraying, as a matter of policy, their moral duty as journalists so that CNN could keep its bureau in Baghdad. CNN did not need a bureau in Baghdad in order to do its job as a news organization. In fact, the condition for having a bureau in Baghdad was that CNN would not do its job as a news organization. CNN accepted that condition. Baghdad made clear that CNN could stay only if it wore the shackles imposed by the regime, and CNN agreed. Why was it so important to have a bureau in Baghdad? Presumably, for reasons of prestige (after all, the competition had bureaus there) and to maintain the public pretense of being on the scene in order to tell the truth. CNN could have just as easily broadcast Saddam's press releases from, say, Amman in Jordan. In that case, they would also have been free to broadcast the truth received from informants in Iraq. As it is, they made a deal in which innocent people would be tortured and killed so that CNN could keep its bureau in Baghdad and not tell the truth to the public. If Mr. Jordan's account is accurate, he and others who agreed to that deal should do more than feel awful. "At last," he writes in the tone of the fearless truth-teller, "these stories can be told freely." He seems not to recognize that the sordid stories are not only about Saddam's tyranny, but also about what must, however reluctantly, be described as the American media's complicity in torture, murder, and deliberate deceit. It is good that news executives expose a cover-up that they helped perpetrate. It would be much better if they also gave evidence of contrition

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for their part in the evil that they can now safely deplore. Mr. Jordan says he and others similarly situated were in a bind. He does not say they did something terribly wrong.

■ "Hitler's Forgotten Library: The Man, His Books, and His Search for God." Hmm, that could be interesting. Under the title of the article by Timothy W. Ryback in the *Atlantic* is this precis: "You can tell a lot about a person from what he reads. The surviving—and largely ignored—remnants of Adolf Hitler's personal library reveal a deep but erratic interest in religion and theology." Aha, so that's what was wrong with Hitler. The article, fortunately, does not live up to its billing. Mr. Ryback quotes Hitler as saying, "Christianity is the worst thing that ever happened to humanity. Bolshevism is the illegitimate child of Christianity. Both are an outgrowth of the Jew." On which Ryback comments, "Hitler was the classic apostate. He rebelled against the established theology in which he was born and bred, all the while seeking to fill the resulting spiritual void." An examination of Hitler's notations in hundreds of books in his personal library—most of them now in the Library of Congress—shows that Hitler tried to fill the void with magic, the occult, and crackpot proposals for new religions designed to displace Christianity. There is no doubt that Hitler believed in divine powers, Ryback concludes. "But Hitler believed that the mortal and the divine were one and the same: that the God he was seeking was in fact himself."

■ On that promised document from Rome against admitting homosexuals to the priesthood, the Pontifical Academy for Life convened a meeting of experts on sexual disorders, one of whom was Dr. Martin Kafka of McClean Hospital in Massachusetts. John Allen of the *National Catholic Reporter* interviewed him. While acknowledging that the great majority of cases in the American crisis involve priests having sex with teenage boys, Kafka emphasizes that this does not mean homosexuality causes abuse. "A risk factor is not a cause," he stressed. Allen reports: "Kafka noted that since priests who abuse minors tend to perform most such acts within five to seven years after ordination, being recently ordained is another risk factor. That does not mean that being freshly ordained 'causes' abuse, any more than homosexuality." Of course not. It is reliably reported that all the abusive priests had two arms, which certainly does not mean that being two-armed causes abuse. One might delicately suggest, however, that it is highly probable that the priests who within five to seven years of ordination gave into the temptation to have sex with teenage boys were homosexual. That is to say, it seems improbable that men who do not experience the desire to have sex with teenage boys have sex with teenage boys. Can we agree on that, at least as a general rule? You can see I am trying to be nuanced here. I readily admit that I may be missing something, but the logic suggests that, with respect to risk factors or causal connections, sexual disorder would appear to be more relevant than recent ordination. In any event, Mr. Allen says that Vatican officials were greatly impressed by the conference of experts, and that what is now the third draft of the promised statement is still going the rounds of Roman dicasteries and may not be released for months. He quotes a source who says of the deliberations, "They're saying they don't want to drive the problem underground and make being gay a clandestine thing in the priesthood. They feel it's better to have it out in the open." Out in the open as in out of the closet? Surely that cannot be what they have in mind, but John Allen is a professional and his report should not be lightly dismissed. It may well be, however, that his source is, as they say, gay-friendly and is among those who are indulging in wishful thinking that the statement will be derailed.

■ A difficult but intriguing test of the possibility of a new Iraq comes with the U.S. decision to reconstruct the Religious Affairs Ministry. The old ministry basically administered, and controlled, Islamic affairs. Now the U.S. has called on people such as Nina Shea, director of the Center for Religious Freedom, to help find Iraqis who can run a Religious Commission that will promote respect and cooperation among competing Islamic groups, as well as Christians and other religious minorities in Iraq. Theirs is a daunting task, and upon its success depends many of the hopes for the advancement of freedom and democracy in that part of the world.

■ Some schools mean it when they say they are Catholic. For instance, Mark A. Sargent, dean of the law school at Villanova University in Philadelphia, writes, "Our Catholic identity is not casual, sentimental, or merely historical." While the school has many non-Catholic faculty and students, he observes, Villanova remains a Catholic university. The occasion for clarifying all this was a fellowship program in which some students elected to work for pro-abortion organizations. The argument was made that, if the program cannot support abortion, it should just as clearly not support capital punishment. Dean Sargent's response is marked by what might be described as uncommon lucidity: "Occasionally, we will not do something because we are Catholic. We will not do something that conflicts with our Catholic identity. Such situations are rare, but sometimes we must take a

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stand. We do so when the conflict is so fundamental and unambiguous that we, in effect, have no choice. Association of Villanova with advocacy for abortion rights presents one such conflict. The fellowship program provides summer stipends for Villanova law students working without pay for public interest organizations. It is funded by an auction, in which Villanova students, faculty, staff, and alumni participate. The program is not an independent student activity. Our name is associated with every aspect of it and makes it go. Our tax-exempt status is used. The auction takes place in our building. The law school administers the funds, and our staff members help organize the program as part of their jobs. Students receiving the stipends are known as Villanova Public Interest Fellows. It is indisputably a Villanova Law School program. A Villanova program obviously cannot be associated with advocacy for abortion rights. Though many individual Catholics believe that there should be some legal right to abortion, the Church's teaching on the topic is fundamental and unambiguous. We have no choice but to ask program fellows working in our name to agree not to engage in such advocacy. They are, of course, free to take jobs outside the program doing whatever they want. But as program fellows they represent us, and they cannot represent us in advocacy for abortion rights. Some might accuse us of hypocrisy in not banning the program work with advocates of capital punishment and other causes that they believe have the same status as abortion in Catholic teaching. What they do not understand is that the status of these issues in Catholic teaching is very different from that of abortion. Take capital punishment, for example. The Pope has asked Catholics to conclude that capital punishment is insupportable. I agree with him completely. But his statements on the issue were not made with the authority that requires the faithful obedience of all Catholics and Catholic institutions, unlike the Church's position on abortion. Indeed, many orthodox supporters of the Pope have disagreed with him on this issue and argued that the Catholic tradition does not support abolition of capital punishment. The law school is thus not compelled to disassociate itself from advocacy for capital punishment as it is from advocacy for abortion rights. This is significant, because we are reluctant to constrain our students unless we absolutely must. With respect to abortion, we must. With respect to capital punishment, it is a matter of choice. We could choose to disassociate ourselves from it on Catholic grounds because we are convinced by the Pope's arguments. And during the next academic year we, as a community, will consider the difficult question of whether we should make that choice. To take time to think hard about what we should do regarding capital punishment is not hypocrisy, but prudence. The need to make a prudential decision about the ambiguous question of capital punishment does not make a principled decision about the unambiguous question of the Church's teaching on abortion hypocritical." One hopes that Dean Sargent's argument will be read, and emulated, by leaders of other schools for whom the name Catholic is not "casual, sentimental, or merely historical."

■ Support for the policies of Israel is not unanimous among evangelical Protestants in this country. Knox Theological Seminary has issued a statement, signed by hundreds of evangelical academics and pastors, opposing an earlier statement by evangelical leaders that, says Knox, "urged the endorsement of far-reaching and unilateral political commitments to the people and land of Israel in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, citing Holy Scripture as the basis for those commitments." It is not true, says the Knox statement, that these leaders speak on behalf of "the seventy million people who constitute the American evangelical community." Knox Seminary is a ministry of Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church in Florida, and is associated with the Presbyterian Church in America. (Not to be confused with other Presbyterian churches in America, and certainly not with the Presbyterian Church USA.) The Knox statement declares: "The entitlement of any one ethnic or religious group to territory in the Middle East called the 'Holy Land' cannot be supported by Scripture. In fact, the land promises specific to Israel in the Old Testament were fulfilled under Joshua. The New Testament speaks clearly and prophetically about the destruction of the second temple in A.D. 70. No New Testament writer foresees a regathering of ethnic Israel in the land, as did the prophets of the Old Testament after the destruction of the first temple in 586 B.C. Moreover, the land promises of the Old Covenant are consistently and deliberately expanded in the New Testament to show the universal dominion of Jesus, who reigns from heaven upon the throne of David, inviting all the nations through the gospel of grace to partake of his universal and everlasting dominion. Bad Christian theology regarding the 'Holy Land' contributed to the tragic cruelty of the Crusades in the Middle Ages. Lamentably, bad Christian theology is today attributing to secular Israel a divine mandate to conquer and hold Palestine, with the consequence that the Palestinian people are marginalized and regarded as virtual 'Canaanites.' This doctrine is both contrary to the teaching of the New Testament and a violation of the gospel mandate. In addition, this theology puts those Christians who are urging the violent seizure and occupation of Palestinian land in moral jeopardy of

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their own bloodguiltiness. Are we as Christians not called to pray for and work for peace, warning both parties to this conflict that those who live by the sword will die by the sword? Only the gospel of Jesus Christ can bring both temporal reconciliation and the hope of an eternal and heavenly inheritance to the Israeli and the Palestinian. Only through Jesus Christ can anyone know peace on earth." The signatories of the Knox statement are overwhelmingly Presbyterian or other Calvinists, but there is also a sprinkling of Baptists and the like who do not subscribe to the apocalyptic "Bible prophecy" view of the State of Israel. The statement is a useful reminder that evangelicaldom is not of a piece.

■ The above statement brought to mind an inquiry from a reader whose Protestant neighbor told her she believed in TULIP. What is that about? the reader wanted to know. TULIP is the acronym for Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace, and the Perseverance of the Saints. Man is totally incapable of doing anything toward his salvation; God's choosing of the saved is in no way conditioned upon our faith or goodness; Christ's work of atonement was only for the elect; the grace of election cannot be resisted; and perseverance means once saved, always saved. Knox Seminary explains total depravity this way: "'T' in TULIP stands for 'total depravity,' which means not that man is as bad as he could be, but that every aspect of man's being has been corrupted and tainted with sin. His mind, his understanding, his heart and affections, his will and volition are all corrupted. From the top of his head to the soles of his feet he is one huge sore and corrupt. Therefore, he is incapable of doing anything good in the sight of God, or even understanding. Not only does he have total sin, he also has total inability to understand or deal with spiritual things." Coral Ridge ministries, under the leadership of D. James Kennedy, is marked also by what may fairly be called an anti-Catholic streak, and has been a hotbed of opposition to the project known as "Evangelicals and Catholics Together." The Reformation tradition has usually affirmed three "solas"—*sola fide, sola gratia, sola scriptura* (faith alone, grace alone, Scripture alone). Knox adds two more for good measure: *sola Christus* and "solely *deo gloria*." (The Latin gets a little wobbly at this point.) All the "solas" are directed against what is taken to be Catholic teaching. The added fourth is against the idea—alien to Catholic faith—that Mary is equal to Christ in the work of redemption, and the added fifth is to prevent any possible insinuation of the notion that human depravity is not totally total. One might observe that it is a terrible thing to learn your catechism against others. On the other hand, it provides a lifetime's supply of things to argue about it. And, given the anodyne sentimentality of contemporary religiosity, a measure of contentiousness over the truths of revelation is not entirely unwelcome.

■ An important document issued recently by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith is titled "On Some Questions Regarding the Participation of Catholics in Political Life." The document was the occasion of an extended interview by ZENIT news service with Robert P. George, professor of jurisprudence at Princeton University. He commented favorably on some initiatives by the U.S. bishops, but, regrettably, ZENIT omitted from its release the following observation by Prof. George: "On the other hand, I must say that I was appalled by the appointment of a notorious pro-abortion politician, Leon Panetta, to the National Review Board that is advising the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops on the protection of young people from sexual abuse. The bishops should pause to consider how this appointment undermines efforts, including their own efforts and those of the Holy See, to make clear to Catholic politicians that pro-abortion advocacy is profoundly unjust and incompatible with Catholic faith. Panetta's appointment sends a message to pro-abortion Catholics of every stripe that the Church is not really serious about her teaching on the sanctity of human life or the priority she gives this teaching. Let me be clear about what I believe is required: Panetta should be removed from the Board immediately. Concern about any embarrassment this might cause to those responsible for his appointment is in no way a sufficient reason to fail to remove him. Every moment he continues to serve, the Church's plea to Catholic politicians and leaders on behalf of vulnerable unborn children, thousands of whom are killed every day by abortion in the United States, is compromised."

■ Author Zinovy Zinik thinks the book is somewhat late coming, but he nonetheless welcomes Martin Amis' *Koba the Dread*, which relates in scathing detail the romance of Western intellectuals (including Amis' father Kingsley) with Stalin and his evil empire. Even many of those who recognized the evil at the time would not abide public criticism of the Soviet "experiment" lest it give aid and comfort to their conservative enemies. Zinik concludes with the grim, and probably true, thought that we have not seen the last of this kind of intellectual corruption. "The word 'experiment' is not accidental here. Is Russia one of those socio-biological laboratories where the Western mind can go and experience something which is unacceptable in one's own civilized (restrictive) society? We know of 'hot-spots' and 'armpits' of the

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world. Places such as Russia are sexy; they should be called 'erogenous zones,' where the withering souls of the British intelligentsia, of the kind that Amis describes, are drawn to regenerate. This is where a certain sort of political writing borders on pornography. Amis even goes as far as denouncing a utopian mode of thinking as such, rejecting, a la Dostoevsky, the paradise that was created through the sacrifice of millions. But it was not merely a grand and ruthless utopian dream of the Just City that made Stalin so attractive in the eyes of the ideologically hungry. It was also loneliness in an intellectual desert, a longing to belong to something beyond a limited egotistical self. Stalin, in fact, was never the Big Brother. He was something bigger. He was the Big Father. The Big Idea. And some of us love big ideas more than our miserable and boring family lives, our brothers and sisters, even if these ideas instill fear in our hearts. Fear is much stronger than love. And that is why I am convinced Stalinism has a future, despite the strong evidence against it put forward by Martin Amis and his predecessors." It is true that there is on the world stage today no big utopian project such as Marxism, fascism, or National Socialism (unless one counts some of the more grandiose dreams of an American imperium "democratizing" the world). But Zinovy Zinik is right: that doesn't mean the bloodletting potential of utopian fantasies is a thing of the past.

■ *Growing Old In Christ* is a worthy book of essays edited by Stanley Hauerwas and others and addressing subjects ranging from the medicalization of death to nursing homes, pastoral care of the dying, and physician-assisted suicide (Eerdmans, 318 pp. $24 paper). M. Therese Lysaught contributes an essay on "Memory, Funerals, and the Communion of Saints" in which she writes: "As Christ's death encompasses the death of our companions, we have confidence that in Christ's body, they will find the promise of the resurrection. As eucharistic, Christian funerals are no Gnostic practice; they are deeply embodied. The body of the deceased is central to the rites. Over and again, the community exercises care with and for that body. Traditionally, the body has been washed, anointed, kissed, carried, sprinkled with holy water, and anointed. But equally central to the structure of the funeral rites are other bodies—specifically, the body of Jesus crucified and risen and the members of the community as the body of Christ. With bodies so juxtaposed, the rites locate our lives and death within the context of Christ's death and resurrection and display that this resurrection is the resurrection of the body. For Christians, this is not merely a wish rooted in an archaic cosmology but rather a fundamental theological claim. It is a claim that our bodies are an integral part of who we are. The resurrection affirms that God will raise us to new life, 'Us'—not some disembodied spirits, but the full persons he knew, loved, and saved. It is a claim that God's grace is mediated through the material: in the incarnation, God became human flesh and dwelt among us; in the Passion, it was Christ's body that was crucified; in the Eucharist, Christ is truly present in the elements of bread and wine; as we partake of these elements, approaching the altar with our bodies, eating and drinking, we become the very body of Christ; and in the eschaton, it is this very materiality of creation that God will transform and glorify. So Christian practice believes that human bodies, even after death, mediate God's grace." Bracing stuff, that. The Catholic bishops of the U.S. have recently allowed for the cremated remains to be present at the funeral Mass, so long as the body was not cremated, as once was commonly the case, in order to signify a denial of the resurrection. Cremation is becoming ever more frequent, and I am sorry about that. Not because it is morally or theologically impermissible, but because it offends against a morally and theologically informed sensibility. It strikes me as a rush to oblivion. There is something right about commending the body to the care of the earth, letting the earth from which we came work its quiet dissolution. In *As I Lay Dying* I wrote that there is even a certain charm in contemplating the feast one's body will provide the worms. I know some think that macabre, but they're wrong. One reads with sadness reports that in Germany funeral practices are rapidly disappearing altogether. No death notices in the paper, no wakes, no funerals, no memorial services. Bodies are taken from hospitals to the ovens of the crematorium and the ashes are dispersed. Just as though the person, and the body inseparable from the person, had never been. That is not closure. It is a forced and unnatural forgetting. It is a mark of a people aptly described as post-Christian.

■ It was probably inevitable. According to Dutch and German newspapers, May 28 was a really big day for Jennifer Hoes of Haarlem in the Netherlands. She turned thirty and became a bride. She married herself. Wearing a gown studded with two hundred latex copies of her own nipples, she promised before Haarlem's registrar to love, respect, honor, and obey herself. "We live in a Me society," she explained to *Der Spiegel*, "hence it is logical that one promises to be faithful to oneself." There is a certain logic to that. The stories say nothing about what happens in the event of divorce, or if she someday wants to marry someone else. I don't think we're going to see a rash of "self-marriages" anytime soon, although I have no doubt those who are taken

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with the idea will find clergy ready to accommodate with a blessing. Jennifer Hoes (or is it Jennifer Hoes-Hoes?) is a more bizarre instance of the orchestrated assault on marriage as a union of a man and a woman. As a supporter of the proposed federal marriage amendment, my position might be described as pro-choice. We know what marriage is. People are free to choose something else, but they are not free to require the rest of us to call that something else marriage.

■ Be grateful for small favors. I have heard some snide remarks that, at long last, the Jesuits of the U.S. have come out against abortion as a very bad thing. The occasion for such remarks is "Standing for the Unborn," a statement of the Office of Social and International Ministries of the Society of Jesus in the U.S. "In treating this delicate and controversial topic, we hope to provide our brother Jesuits, colleagues, parishioners, and students with the spiritual leadership and ethical guidance they expect from us," the statement says. Thirty years after *Roe v. Wade*, and after the most careful deliberation "drawing upon the heritage of our Jesuit history and the treasure of Ignatian spirituality," the Jesuits "underscore the correctness of Catholic Church teaching regarding abortion." They recognize that "a spirit of callous disregard for life shows itself in direct assaults on human life such as abortion and capital punishment, as well as in senseless violence, escalating militarism, racism, xenophobia, and the skewed accumulation of wealth and life-sustaining resources." So the reader is assured that the Jesuits are not about to get caught up in a one-issue obsession over abortion. Based on "the heritage of Catholic moral teaching" and "our Jesuit tradition," the statement says, "Our long-term goal remains full legal recognition of and protection for the unborn child—from the moment of conception." Admittedly, the nervous nuancing is excessive and the statement is anything but a clarion trumpet call for battle on behalf of the culture of life, but "Standing for the Unborn" should be welcomed as an exercise in Jesuit catch-up and a promising advance in the Jesuit-Catholic ecumenical dialogue. I expect that those Jesuits who pushed for this statement had to sweat blood, and will receive their well-earned service medals in the world to come.

■ "It's just a place where we can get to know one another and talk about common concerns." That's how one Catholic bishop describes Christian Churches Together (CCT), a proposed new organization. The purpose seems unexceptionable in its modesty. At the same time, concerns are raised as to whether this is a round-about way of reviving the old and moribund National Council of Churches (NCC) by an infusion of fresh blood—notably Roman Catholic and evangelical Protestant. And fresh money. This is denied by parties involved in launching CCT. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson of the Reformed Church in America, a veteran in ecumenical organizations and chairman of the CCT steering committee, says the relationship between the two institutions will be a matter of "discernment" for the thirty-six member communions of the NCC. And, one supposes, a matter of discernment for the members of CCT. The preamble of the proposal adopted in January includes what might be called, without disrespect, ecumenical boilerplate: CCT will foster "relationships where our differences can be better understood, our commonalities better affirmed, and our brokenness healed by God." Another goal is "a strong prophetic voice of the Christian community in America." One might wonder what the United Church of Christ, the Southern Baptist Convention, and the Catholic Church can say together on the most hotly disputed questions in our public life—never mind what they can say in "a strong prophetic voice." CCT will be composed, we are told, by "the five families." That's not a reference to *The Godfather* but to the five distinct constellations of Christianity in America—"evangelical/Pentecostal, historic Protestant, historic racial/ethnic, Orthodox, and Roman Catholic." Historic Protestant refers to the Protestant oldline and racial/ethnic means mainly the black communions. CCT will also include national Christian organizations, and all decisions will be made by consensus. The proposed program and budget, at least at the beginning, is very modest: an annual assembly of two and a half days and, once CCT is up and running, an annual budget of $250,000. Perhaps the bishop is right. What harm can come from Christian leaders getting together to talk once a year? On the other hand, it is probably wise to keep in mind the round-about way mentioned above.

■ Over the years, the Supreme Court, with other courts following in its wake, has struck down aid to Catholic schools because they are "pervasively sectarian" and "indoctrinate" their students. Gerard V. Bradley of Notre Dame Law School brilliantly exposes the underlying prejudice in such rulings in the Fall 2002 issue of the *Texas Review of Law and Politics*. "The Court," writes Bradley, "has consistently interpreted the Free Exercise Clause to require the government to accept a sincere believer's statement of what he believes, no matter how strange or singular those beliefs may seem." Not in the case of Catholic schools, however. In that case, the Court presumes to know better than the people who run the schools and the parents who send their children to them just what

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those schools are up to. Students of the First Amendment will want to take a careful look at Bradley's argument.

■ Men are from Mars, women from Venus. I expect there is a strong measure of truth in that. At least men think they should act as though they are from Mars, which means, among other things, as though they are in control. I have written elsewhere that, as a general rule, women are much better around the sick and debilitated than men, not least because they have usually gone through the ordeal of bearing children. They are more at home with the messiness of life. Admittedly, these are generalizations, but they are brought to mind by a report on physician-assisted suicide in Oregon, the only state in which mercy killing is legal. According to *American Medical News*, the dominant (84 percent) reason for choosing death is the fear of losing autonomy and the ability to do the things one wants to do. A doctor with a suicide advocacy group says, "The No. 1 reason given to me is: 'I don't want to have anyone wipe my rear end.' That is the most humiliating aspect of terminal illness." Despite there being many more aged and debilitated women, 71 percent of those choosing suicide in Oregon are men.

■ Oh, dear. George Weigel in his column in diocesan papers and I in this space were both critical of the group of fifty-eight priests in Boston who agitated for the resignation of Cardinal Law. The *Boston Globe* ran a story on our criticism of the fifty-eight, and now William Bole in *Commonweal* weighs in with an essay saying that we "smeared" the priests in "a rush of rancor [that] verges on calumny." In support of his complaint, he reports that the two priests in his parish who signed the letter are kind, pastoral, and faithful to Catholic teaching. It is very good to know that. Mr. Bole might advise them to be more careful about the company they keep. And I, in describing what the agitation represented, should have more carefully underscored the representative nature of the group, thus avoiding the impression that every priest who called for Law's resignation fit the description I offered. I readily acknowledge that some may have been guilty of no more than what, in my view, was an error in judgment. On the other hand, joining in a public campaign, led by the *Boston Globe*, to remove your bishop is, at the very least, a very big error in judgment.

■ "I respect and admire the French, who have been a far greater nation than we shall ever be, that is, if greatness means anything loftier than money and bombs." That is Thomas Fleming, editor of a paleoconservative magazine called *Chronicles*, cheering France's anti-American turn this past March. It serves as the epigraph to David Frum's long article in *National Review* of March 19, "Unpatriotic Conservatives." In response to inquiries: Yes, Frum gets right the story of the emergence of paleo sectarianism when, in May of 1989, the Rockford Institute of Illinois, publisher of *Chronicles*, forcibly ejected us from the offices of the Center for Religion and Society here in New York. We had established the Center in 1984 and I became increasingly uneasy with what was understandably viewed as the racist and anti-Semitic tones of *Chronicles* under the direction of Fleming, its then new editor. I was preparing to break the connection with Rockford and go independent when one rainy Friday morning Rockford executives showed up, fired the entire staff, put us out on the street, and changed the office locks. We could have done without the melodrama, but every May 5 we have a gala staff luncheon to celebrate the occasion. As for the Rockford Institute and *Chronicles*, it is perfectly understandable if you never heard of them until now. It is just as well. (Some day I may get around to writing up my notes on the possibility of morally licit Schadenfreude.)

■ For understandable reasons, many Americans are having something of a love affair with Britain's Prime Minister Tony Blair. Agree with him or not, his presentation in Parliament kicking off the ten-hour debate prior to the Iraq intervention is, I think, one of the great political speeches of recent decades. Here, but even more on the other side of the Atlantic, there is much chatter about the Christian commitment of Blair and George W. Bush, and how that is or is not a factor in their relationship. In a style reflective of American journalism's treatment of those who are thought to be somewhat too serious about religion, the *Spectator*, a frequently clever Tory magazine, attacks Blair's profession of Christian faith as insincere and arrogant. A fair point is scored about his adoption of the intellectually and morally incoherent posture on abortion: "I am personally opposed but . . ." That is a grave disappointment. But Peter Osborne's attack, "The Special Relationship Between Blair and God," is itself incoherent, as in his quoting favorably a founder of the Christian Socialist movement, of which Blair is a member, who complains that Blair fails to translate his Christian beliefs into public policy. So the *Spectator* wants Blair to be a more consistent Christian socialist? The gravamen of the article, however, is that Blair does not defer to religious leaders who opposed military action against Iraq. "It is characteristic of those who feel that they have an unmediated line to the Lord," writes Mr. Osborne, "that they think they can make the law themselves." It is widely reported that Blair intends

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to become a Catholic after he leaves office. To which Osborne observes that "he occasionally lays claim to the kind of direct relationship to Christ that is more readily associated with the Protestant than with the Roman Catholic Church." In disagreeing with a public figure who does not hide his Christian faith, the convention is to claim that he is a borderline fanatic who thinks he is acting under direct orders from God. That is often joined, somewhat contradictorily, to the claim that he is a hypocrite. Mr. Osborne apparently cannot decide whether he is more upset about Mr. Blair believing or not believing what he says he believes. So he settles on finding him guilty of both. It is a very American media treatment of religion in public.

■ The Spring 2003 issue of the influential *City Journal*, published by the Manhattan Institute, has a lead article by Marjorie King that should be of interest to readers with children in public schools. "Queering the Schools" documents the ways in which LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered) activists have succeeded in enlisting the support of the National Education Association in promoting—under the guise of encouraging tolerance—sexual practices that most Americans consider bizarre, destructive, and morally repugnant. The details of the programs described in the article, some of which are aimed at children in kindergarten and first grade, are graphic and disturbing, and necessarily so. The article relates the formidable difficulties confronted by parents who have challenged such programs, not least being that they are derided as intolerant. The author makes a valuable contribution in explaining some of the changes in gay activism over the years. It used to be that children were taught to be tolerant of homosexuals, who, it was said, could not help being that way. But "queer theory" has now moved from special studies programs in universities to the elementary school. According to queer theory, everyone is polymorphously perverse (Norman O. Brown) and children should be encouraged to explore, develop, and express the full range of their sexual desires and possibilities. "Queering the Schools" illustrates the ways in which the once marginal is being mainstreamed with remarkable rapidity. People who subscribe to the old-fashioned notion that public schools are accountable to the public should take note.

■ Here is an item that you may be the first in your neighborhood to know about. "If a real-life Indiana Jones wanted to find the Ark of the Covenant, he would only have to turn to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, say partisans in Addis Ababa. All traces of the ark, the sacred chest that Moses had built by divine instruction to safeguard the tablets of the law, were lost after the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem in 587 B.C. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church, however, appeals to tradition to affirm that a wooden chest covered in gold and decorated with cherubs, and in the care of a solitary Orthodox priest in an Axum church, is the lost ark of the Old Testament. Ethiopian Christians (about thirty-one million, or half the population) honored the ark this past March at Temket, the feast of Jesus' baptism. According to legend, the ark was stolen by Menelik, the son of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, who brought it to Ethiopia. Ethiopia converted to Christianity around the year 330, but the legend of the ark does not arise until the twelfth century, in a forthright attempt by the ruling dynasty to proclaim itself heir to King Solomon. Despite the historical unknowns, the faith of Ethiopian Orthodox in the Axum ark continues. They attribute salvific qualities to it, among them the country's independence. Ethiopia is the only African country not subjected to colonization in the strict sense, though it was occupied by Fascist Italy from 1936-1941." Perhaps so, but Harrison Ford taking on the solitary priest of Axum would not have made for much of a movie.

■ After the military success in Iraq, articles and news reports multiplied telling us that the real difficulties were just beginning. They don't know the half of it. In March the 20th International Prophecy Conference was held in Tampa, Florida, and it seems that pretribulationists (those who believe that Christians will be raptured prior to the tribulation and the final return of Christ) are all atwitter over Iraq's connections with ancient Babylon, the Euphrates, repentant Ninevah, and other places of biblical significance. As if that isn't enough, *Armageddon*, the eleventh installment in the "Left Behind" series is due out in the next several weeks. It is the story of Satan ruling the world from a restored Babylon in Iraq and facing the cosmic battle with Israel and her Christian allies. And you thought the nefarious neocons masterminding Bush's foreign policy were scary.

■ Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle complains that conservative talk show hosts are dangerous. Some of them criticize him a lot. "The threat level goes up," says Daschle. Similarly, columnist Anna Quindlen writes frequently about the hate mail she receives, underscoring the courage required in keeping the liberal faith. *Wall Street Journal* columnist Peggy Noonan, employing that fine Irish phrase of exasperated patience, says enough is enough already. "Well Anna, and Tom, I have never written of this or even spoken of it, but let me tell you something. My

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political philosophy is conservative. I am pro-life. I live in New York City, surrounded by modern people. They are mostly left wing, they are all pro-choice, many of them passionately and even furiously so. I have written books saying Ronald Reagan is a great man and Hilary Clinton is a bad woman. I know something about being a target, and I know something about hate mail. I have received not hundreds but thousands of the most personal and obscene denunciations: I have received death threats; I have been threatened with blackmail; I have been informed that I do not deserve to live; I have received a three-page typed, double-spaced letter with perfect grammar and syntax the first sentence of which was 'Dear Ms. Noonan, Let me explain to you why you are a . . . ' and here I cannot suggest the word used. But damned if he didn't make a good case. I used to hear regularly from a woman who'd tell me she hopes I have a brain hemorrhage. I have never talked about this because I would consider speaking of it both self-pitying and self-aggrandizing. But there's another reason. I'm a grown-up. I know you pay a price for the stands you take. It's a disputatious world. Rocks get thrown. I could make myself safer by changing my views, but why would I abandon what I think is true so that people I think are wrong will like me? That doesn't make sense. So I stand where I stand and pay. And you know what? Too bad. Tough. That's life. Nothing is free. If you hold a controversial position you will draw controversy and its cousins: denunciation, dislike, etc. It's the price you pay. And unlike Tom Daschle, I pay it without a taxpayer-funded security team to keep me safe." What about that don't you understand?

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Sources: Andrew Sullivan on sodomy, *New Republic*, March 24, 2003.

WHILE WE'RE AT IT: Duncan Stroik on church admission fees, *Sacred Architecture*, Fall/Winter 2002. CNN in Baghdad, *New York Times*, April 11, 2003. On Hitler's library, *Atlantic*, May 2003. Zinovy Zinik on the future of Stalinism, *Times Literary Supplement*, August 23, 2002. Self-marriage in the Netherlands, UPI, March 13, 2003. On Christian Churches Together, *Origins*, March 20, 2003. Suicide men, *American Medical News*, March 24, 2003. On Tony Blair's religion, *Spectator*, April 5, 2003. The ark of the covenant, *Sacred Architecture*, Fall/Winter 2002. Babylon in Iraq, *Religion Watch*, April 2003.

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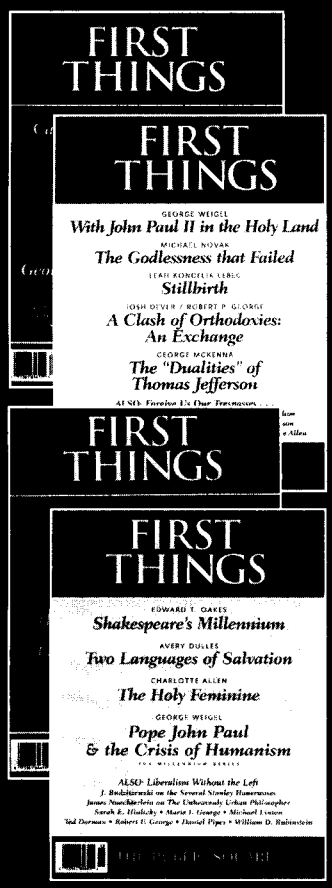

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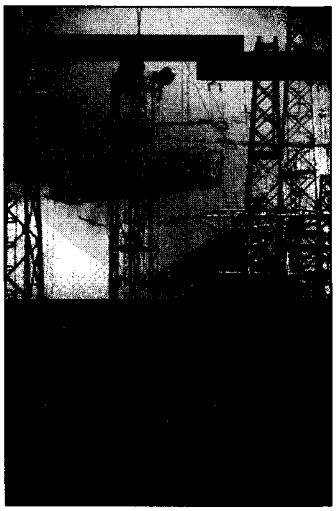

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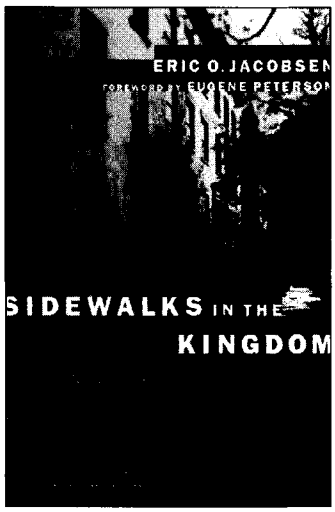

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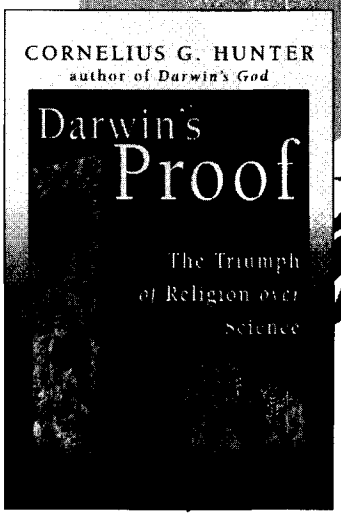

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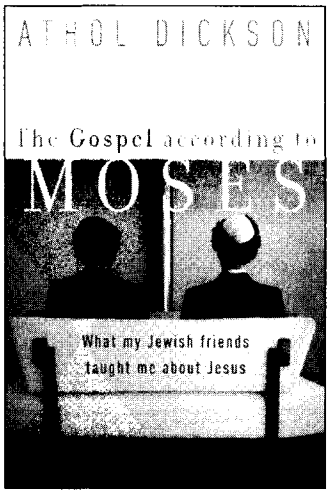

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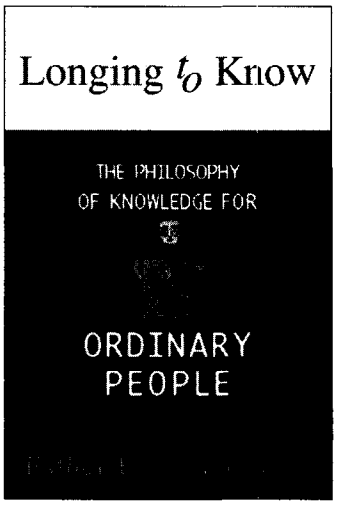

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